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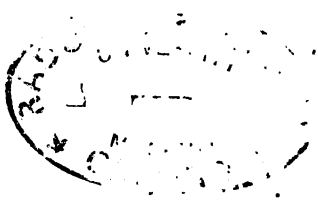

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THE

MOOR AND THE LOCH.

Drawn from life, with his trusty flint-locked long-barrelled rifle of the last century.

THE

MOOR AND THE LOCH:

CONTAINING

PRACTICAL HINTS ON HIGHLAND SPORTS,
AND NOTICES OF THE HABITS OF THE DIFFERENT CREATURES
OF GAME AND PREY IN THE MOUNTAINOUS
DISTRICTS OF SCOTLAND;

WITH

INSTRUCTIONS IN RIVER, BURN, AND LOCH-FISHING.

BY

JOHN COLQUHOUN.

"Ilk flow'r that blooms on foreign fell
Wad mind me o' the heather-bell;
Ilk little streamlet's jeuk and turn
Wad mind me o' Glenourock burn;
Lands may be fair ayont the sea,
But Hieland hills and lochs for me!"

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SECOND EDITION.

LONDON:
JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET.

MDCCCXLI

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Stamford Street.

TO

SIR JAMES COLQUHOUN OF LUSS, BART., M.P., &c., &c.,

IN REMEMBRANCE OF

THE MANY RAMBLES WE HAVE TAKEN TOGETHER,

IN BOYHOOD AND YOUTH,

WITH OUR FISHING-RODS AND GUNS,

THIS BOOK IS AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED,

BY HIS BROTHER,

JOHN COLQUHOUN.

PREFACE.

I OFFER no apology for the publication of this volume, as I have never seen any other which attempts to give minute directions in the sports, or information regarding the animals, of my native hills; and since they are becoming increasingly the objects of pursuit, especially to English sportsmen, some such book seemed really needed.

With regard to the subject itself, many will blame as trifling any work which treats merely of amusement; and I am aware that this censure is not altogether unfounded. It is not, however, to divert men from higher occupations, that I ask them, now and then, to ramble over the wild hill

or by the side of the moorland loch. Would not the dyspeptic student feel both his mental and bodily powers increased by such a substitute for his customary monotonous stroll? And need I tell the indolent voluptuary or midnight opium-eater what benefit *he* might find, would he thus change his stimulus, and ensure to himself the quiet slumbers which follow temperance and health? I well know, indeed, the engrossing nature even of these harmless recreations, and am far from intending my book to lead any one to spend as much time in them as I have too often done. But I rather hope it may have a contrary tendency, by communicating to the novice in Highland sports such knowledge as he could not acquire for himself without long practice and patient investigation.

The sports of the field, when taken as *recreations*, and not as *pursuits*, may surely be ranked among the most innocent; nor can I see that hours passed in such scenes as those I have attempted to describe, need be lost to an observant and well-directed mind.

INTRODUCTION

TO

THE SECOND EDITION.

In presenting to the public a second edition of "The Moor and the Loch," I beg to offer my most sincere thanks for the very gratifying manner in which the first was received. The whole has been most carefully revised and much enlarged. Having been repeatedly told that an article on Deer-stalking—that most truly national of all Highland sports—was quite a desideratum in such a book, I have added a chapter on the subject, the materials of which were gathered exclusively from my own experience. Should this happen to interest any one who has a taste for the rifle, let me recommend Mr. Scrope's

beautiful work, which ought to ornament the library of every sportsman in the kingdom.

I have also inserted chapters on Burn and River-fishing, comprehending my ideas of that delightful amusement, deduced from the practice of my early years to the present time. They differ a little from the theories professed by many who consider themselves masters in the art, but have at any rate the advantage of being less complicated; while, as to the point of success, I leave its decision in the hands of any accomplished Fly-fisher.

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THE MOOR AND THE LOCH.

GROUSE AND BLACK-GAME SHOOTING.

GROUSE-SHOOTING, when the season begins, and our moors are thronged by ardent sportsmen from all parts of the kingdom, although requiring some tact and skill, is mere child's play compared to what it becomes when the birds are wild and wary.

In the month of August or September, a few general rules may enable a good shot, upon a tolerable moor, to load his game-carrier. He should commence upon the farthest end of his range, giving his dogs the wind, and select some part of the moor, near the centre, to which he must endeavour to drive all his packs. His follower should be a good marker,* active and intelligent in com-

* In marking grouse, when you can no longer distinguish them from the brown heather, still let your eye follow their course, as the flapping of their wings when they light is much longer discernible than the rapid motion of their flight.

prehending his least signal, and always ready, when the dogs point, to place himself so as to prevent the birds taking a wrong direction. After having skirmished in this way until about two or three o'clock, he may send for a fresh couple of his oldest and most experienced dogs, and, with the greatest care, begin to beat this reserved ground. If the day is favourable, and he has not strangely mismanaged, he ought to make bloody work. Should his range be along the steep side of a mountain, the birds are much less likely to leave the ground; when raised, they will probably (unless he is beating up and down the hill, which is neither an easy nor good way) fly straight along the mountain-side, and the young grouse-shooter might suppose would drop down upon a line with the place they rose from; but no such thing,—the pack, after getting out of sight, before lighting will take a turn, and fly a considerable way either to the right or left. The sportsman must judge by the wind,* nature of the ground, &c., which direction they have taken: if he can see the way their heads are turned just when going out of sight, he may also form a shrewd guess; but if he does not find them on the one side, he must try the other. Should he have the whole of a detached hill, even if a small range, the birds are so unwilling to leave it at the beginning of

* If high, grouse are very apt to fly with it, unless they have some stronger motive to the contrary.

the season, that they will often fly round and round until he has completely broken them: no finer opportunity than this for filling the bag. Early in the season, when an unbroken pack is found at evening feed, if the birds do not rise together, too much care cannot be taken to search the ground. They often wander a good way from each other, and after hearing a shot will lie till they are almost trod upon.

On some of our moors grouse are as plentiful as partridges in the preserved turnip-fields of Norfolk: no man would then break his beat to follow a pack; but let him select the lowest and most likely ground, as near the centre of his range as possible, for his evening shooting. Grouse, and indeed all game, when raised, generally fly to lower ground, and when they begin to move about on the feed, are more easily found by the dogs; for which reason the evening is always the most successful time of the day.*

* Should the sportsman knock down an old cock and hen, and afterwards have the mortification to see the "squeaking" pack rise all round him, my advice is *not* to massacre them from the idea that if left alone they must *necessarily* die a more cruel death. I know most keepers will say that the young birds would starve, and until lately I was of the same opinion; but I began to doubt the truth of it a year or two ago, and this season had an opportunity of proving its fallacy. On a part of my moor where the birds are very scarce I got a point, and after killing a brace was proceeding to pick them up, when the young pack rose, five in number, as decided "squeakers" as ever struck remorse into the callous heart of the shooter. I at once determined to ascertain whether poults left in so unprotected a state *must* die. So after ranging the ground most carefully for a consider-

The experienced grouse-shooter well knows how little it will avail him to attempt to find out the best part of a moor with which he is unacquainted, by a distant *coup d'œil*, or by theory, however plausible. On the same range the packs will be strongest and most numerous one year on the top of the hill, another on the brow, and a third on the flat at the foot, and this often without any assignable reason. A man who chooses his range by rule will be as likely to fix on the worst as the best. The only plan, supposing he has neglected to make himself acquainted with the ground before the 12th of August, is to find out from the shepherds where the packs are most plentiful, and concert measures accordingly. It often happens that, if the hatching-time is very rainy, the best packs may be found on the brow of a hill, from being less exposed to the wet; and in a dry sultry season the best places to range are the flats between the hills, or even the

able distance, to be certain there was no other pack near, I left them undisturbed for eight days. At the end of that time I found and shot two of them, not at all fallen off in condition, and quite large enough to count in the day's return of the slain. These poults were not in company, but at a little distance from each other. It therefore appears to me that their great danger is from vermin, missing the warning cry of the old birds when an enemy approaches. There can be no doubt of its being both cruel and destructive to the young brood to murder their protectors; but should the sportsman unfortunately do so, and not discover his mistake till too late, he had better give them the chance of escaping vermin than shoot them *out of humanity*, erroneously supposing that they cannot but die of starvation.

tops, if dotted with "peat-hags."* The very reverse, however, may be the case if there are few mossy springs or "peat-hags" on the flat or top, and if the hill-side is supplied with water for the young packs by a constant succession of little brooks. It is impossible for a stranger to find out these *minutiæ* without questioning those who are in the habit of travelling the hill, and who will be just as likely to know *what is of more consequence,* viz., where the packs are to be found in the greatest abundance.

As to the ground immediately round him, a man accustomed to the moors can always tell whether it is likely to harbour game: and let him be ranging the top, the ridge, the brow, or the flat at the foot of the hill, if he is surrounded by alternate patches of old and young heather, interspersed with numerous green mossy springs, or peat-hags, half filled with water, he is in full expectation of a point. If, on the contrary, the ground is bare and the heather burnt, or if it be growing in one unvarying crop of rank luxuriance, he looks anxiously for a break, and almost grudges the unflagging exertions of his persevering dogs: still he

* Places where peats have been "cast" or dug out, in which the moss-water collects, and affords drink to the grouse. Sometimes these "hags" are formed by natural rifts in the bog, with a small red brook running through. This water is very unwholesome, and a man had better bear his thirst than drink it. The peat-stack is a sure index of these supplies of water, and can be seen at a considerable distance.

never gives up hope, and often finds game where he least expects it.

When grouse are raised on the top or brow of a hill, the flight is generally much shorter than when found on a level at the foot. In the latter case they generally fly far out of sight, but if the ground is hilly and uneven they often take a few dodging turns, and drop down at no great distance. On the steep peak of the heathery hill I have seen them fly quite round, and again settle not far from where they were first discovered. In fine weather, before the packs are strong, and especially before they have been much shot at, their flights are usually not near so long as they are afterwards; but even then, should the day be windy, they are generally rapid and uncertain. When this is unfortunately the case, they are so capricious in the choice of their refuge as often to baffle the most determined tramper of the moors.

Grouse are much more difficult to find in the middle of the day than in the morning and evening, when they move more about; but in sultry weather they lie quite still, except at feeding-time, and not having stirred perhaps for hours the dogs may come within a yard or two before winding them. To procure shots at such times tries the mettle both of the sportsman and his dogs. During continued rain they are apt to gather beneath the shade of a hillock, or in scaurs and ravines. To con-

tinue ranging is mere waste of time until it clears and the ground has dried a little, for, to say nothing of the other miseries, the birds, even when found, will not run a yard in the wet heather, and generally take wing at a long distance. When the weather is boisterous they are very fidgety and wild even at the beginning of the season: it is then easy to see who does and who does not understand anything of grouse-shooting. Every inequality of ground must be taken advantage of; the sportsman should crouch as much as he can, wearing a drab-coloured cap, which will often take him five or six yards nearer his game than the lowest-crowned hat he can procure. If possible he should always advance from lower ground, walking up any cracks or hollows in the moss. When this is skilfully done, he appears to the birds at a greater distance than when they see his whole figure prominently coming down upon them from higher ground. I have already said, that, if you have reason to suppose the pack are on the side or at the foot of a steep hillock, *only a gunshot in height,* the best plan to pop upon them within reach is to come straight over the top, but under other circumstances this should never be attempted.

Most young shots are not content unless they are upon the moor by peep of day on the long-anticipated 12th of August,—and what is the result? They have found and disturbed most of the packs before they have

well fed, and one half will rise out of distance and fly away unbroken. Had the moor been left quiet till eight or nine o'clock, fair double shots might have been obtained at almost every pack, and many would have been scattered for the evening shooting. It will generally be found that, if two equal shots upon equal moors uncouple their dogs, one at five o'clock, and the other at nine, and compare notes at two in the afternoon, the lazy man will have the heaviest game-bag, and his ground will be in the best order for the deadly time of the day: to say nothing of his competitor's disadvantage from having fruitlessly wasted his own strength, and that of his dogs, when many of the packs would not allow him to come within reach. My advice, therefore, to the young grouse-shooter, is always to wait till the birds have done feeding. If he starts at eight o'clock, and travels the moors as he ought, there is time enough before dark to put his powers to the proof, however he may pique himself upon them. I do not mean to say he must rush over the ground, but keep up a steady determined walk, up hill and down hill, without flagging for an instant, unless the dogs come upon the scent of game. Of all sports grouse-shooting is the most laborious; none can stand a comparison with it, except deer-stalking; and yet the veriest "soft," puffing and blowing at every step, may put off a whole day upon the moors—travelling them I will not call it,—and boast after dinner

HYBRID BETWEEN GROUSE AND BLACK-GAME.

that "he wonders how people can find grouse-shooting so toilsome and fatiguing; *fox-hunting* is much more so!"

There are a few rules which a man not accustomed to climb hills will find his account in observing, if he would escape the suppressed smile of derision which his flagging will be sure to excite from the sturdy hill-man who carries his bag. One is, to eat a very light breakfast; another, to drink as little as possible; but especially no spirits and water. If you can hold out without drinking till your luncheon or dinner-time, your thirst will never be very oppressive; but once begin, and the difficulty of passing a clear brook is tenfold increased. The provision-basket should only consist of a cold fowl, or a few sandwiches, and a bottle of table-beer or light ale. When you again begin your exertions make your attendant carry a bottle of strong tea, without cream or sugar, which will more effectually quench your thirst than a whole flask-full of spirits and water to correspond. Should any object to this "*tea-total*" system, a little fruit may be no bad substitute. When I first took out a licence, I thought the spirit-flask almost as indispensable as the powder-flask, but experience has since taught me that nothing more effectually expends the remaining strength of the half-worn-out sportsman than a few pulls at the liquor-flask, however diluted; he gains a temporary stimulus, which soon ends in complete exhaustion.

As the season advances and the birds become strong on the wing, the difficulty of breaking the packs is tenfold increased, and the sportsman's energy and activity doubly tried; for, although he has not to endure the burning heat of August and September, yet his pace may be with advantage quickened, as there is less risk of passing birds; and he should also carry a heavier gun. Taking everything into consideration, a medium between the common fowling-piece and that recommended for wild-fowl shooting on the lochs will be found the most efficient. A gun of this description ought to carry No. 5, or even 4, with the same regularity as a common gun would No. 7. Some fire very large shot among the birds, when they rise, in order to disperse them: this may often succeed, but is a most unsportsman-like proceeding. The plan I always adopt is, first to select my ground for the evening, taking care that it is full of hillocks; grouse have a great liking to them, and when thus concealed their flights are much shorter. I then commence ranging my other ground as described; and when I get a shot, although the pack should rise at some distance, I select one of the leaders, and, if it drop, the pack is far more likely to break, and the nearer birds are left for the second barrel.

Always cross the dog a good way ahead when he points, and cock both barrels; it is impossible to bring down your birds in crack style otherwise. Unless shoot-

ing in company, I generally have my gun cocked, and held ready to fire, when walking over ground where there is any likelihood of birds rising—this I only recommend to the experienced sportsman.

Never increase the size of your shot when the birds are wild, *unless with a larger gun.* Those who object to this additional weight, or who give their gun to be carried by a servant, will make but poor work at this season, as many of the best chances rise without a point at all. Stick to the last to scattered birds: one broken pack at this time is worth a dozen others.

About an hour before dusk, be upon the hillocks with your most experienced pointers: if they have been accustomed to grouse-shooting at the end of the season, they will hunt round them with the greatest caution; and when they wind birds, if ever so slightly, will point and look for your approach. Suppose your dog, statue-like, on one of the hillocks,—watch the direction of his nose, walk rapidly and noiselessly round in the opposite direction, as it were to meet his point, and you will most probably come upon the birds within fair distance. Should the hillock be steep, and only about a gunshot in height, walk straight over the top, and if the grouse be, as is most probable, on the side or at the bottom, you are certain of a tolerable shot: should you have broken any packs in the morning, and driven them here, you are very likely to get some excellent chances.

As the shades of evening close upon you, the birds will lie much better: many a capital shot have I got when I could scarcely see them. A very indistinct view of his object is quite enough for a good snap shot who is accustomed to his gun, and I would not guarantee the success of any other at this time of the year. In fact, you must be prepared for every shot being a snap at the beginning of the day, and many at the end. By always following the above directions, I scarcely ever, to the end of the season, came home with less than two or three brace after a few hours' shooting, upon a moor where I used, in August, to average from fifteen to twenty in a whole day.

No man ought to beat the same range oftener than twice a-week, as packs of grouse, after being dispersed, seldom all collect in the evening like partridges, but are often some time before they gather; the best days are those with a warm sun and light breeze. Cold wind and rain, after October, makes them flock; and it is of no use to disturb them till it is fine again, when they disperse. You may expect good sport the first black frost. A sort of lethargy seems to come over the birds: I have seen several in a day standing up, without an attempt at concealment, within forty yards—a rare opportunity for poachers and bad shots.

Many suppose that grouse change their ground with the changes of weather, and even lay down rules what

parts of the mountain they frequent according to its variations. I have watched them narrowly for many years, and am firmly of opinion that they only shift to the longest heather on the lee side of any knolls near their usual haunts, when they want shelter from the sun, wind, or rain. When they become strong on the wing, and the weather is cold or boisterous, they will shift from one mountain-face to its opposite counterpart, to avoid the cold and take advantage of the sunshine, provided the distance does not much exceed their ordinary flight. This, I think, they never *willingly* do at the beginning of a season. I have likewise heard it asserted that grouse descend the hills to feed: this I also believe to be erroneous; and have no doubt that, at feeding times, they only move to the first short, sweet patch of young heather, the tender tops of which form their chief food during a great part of the year, except indeed in winter, when many of them come down to lower ground than they ever frequent at other times. The young *poutts* eat the seeds of the various grasses and weeds that grow in the moors, and are particularly fond of sorrel. At the hatching-time the hen devours quantities of earth-worms with great avidity.

BLACK-GAME.

Black-game do not pair like grouse; and shooting

the hen* and young birds at the beginning of the season is a simple business. You have only to make yourself master of the places they frequent. They may always be found near a short thick rush, easily seen on the moor, the brown seeds of which form the principal food of the young packs. When your dogs point near these rushes, and especially if they "road," you may be almost sure of black-game. The old hen generally rises first, the young pack lying like stones; no birds are more easily shot.

The old cocks, even in August, are never very tame: for although, where the heather or rushes are long and rank, they may lie tolerably well at first, yet even then they are sure to rise very high, and take a long flight, generally quite beyond your beat: they are sometimes found singly; at others, in small flocks, from six to ten.

* Many gentlemen are now beginning to shoot the hens, observing the great increase of black-game and decrease of grouse in some districts. This may in part be attributed to the advance of cultivation; but I cannot help thinking the black-game have a good share in driving off the grouse—as I know of one instance where the latter were killed off, and the former again returned to their old haunts. I believe it is also more than suspected that the capercailzie, wherever they are introduced, have a great inclination to dispossess both. It is a curious fact, that the young capercailzie thrive better under the foster-care of the grey hen than if left to their natural protectress. When a capercailzie's eggs are discovered, they are divided among several grey hens, whose nests the keepers search out for this purpose. The grey hens, however, will not sit upon them, unless some of their own eggs are also left. But when the young are hatched, they pay equal regard to both; and it is not until the capercailzie are fully grown that they drive away their step-mothers, who dread them as much as hawks.

Their food on the moor consists of cranberries; another berry, found in mossy places, called in Scotland the "crawberry;" and the seed of the rush before named.* They, being very strong on the wing, have not the same reason as the young packs for keeping near their food, and are often found far from it, especially in the heat of the day; shelter from the sun being their chief object. There can then be no better place to beat for them than among thick crops of bracken. Should you find them in such good cover, they will often give you a capital double shot.

As the season advances, black-game are the wildest of all birds. Fair open shooting at them is quite out of the question. As they never eat heather,† their food on the moors soon becomes scarce; they then much more frequent the stubble-fields and copses by the hill-sides. You may often see twenty or thirty feeding together on the sheaves, when the corn is first cut; but exceedingly alert for the approach of an enemy. I have seen them doing the farmer as much injury as so many barn-door fowls. Your best plan then is to hide yourself among the sheaves, and wait for their feeding-hours. If you

* I shot a fine old cock last August, 1840, whose crop was full of a yellow flower of the dandelion kind, very common on the moors.

† Black-game when domesticated do eat heather, likewise grouse the tops of birch, alder, &c.: this, in both cases, I believe to be an acquired taste, as I have often opened their crops at different times during the shooting season, and never once detected heather in those of black-game, nor anything except heather or corn in those of grouse.

are well concealed, and select the proper part of the field, you may have an opportunity of killing a brace sitting with your first barrel, and another bird with your second.

As the fields become bare, and the days shorten, they begin to feed three times; namely, at daybreak, at noon, and an hour before dusk. To get a shot then is much more difficult. I have made a hole in the stone walls which enclose most of the Highland fields, in order to shoot through it. I have also placed a bush on the top to screen myself when rising to fire; but they have such quick sight and acute hearing, both well exercised when feeding on this dangerous ground, that I have found it a better plan not to attempt the sitting shot. My way is to crawl as near the place where they are feeding as possible, and make my attendant and one of the farm-servants enter at each end of the field opposite, and come leisurely down towards the birds; they are then almost sure to fly over your head, and give you an excellent double shot. Care must be taken, however, to ascertain that no sentinel is perched upon the wall, or any high ground near, as there often is at the beginning of the feed. Should there be, wait patiently till he joins the flock. I have also, by this method, often got a capital chance at grouse feeding on the stubble, which they sometimes do in the lowlands, when returning from my shooting-ground in Selkirkshire.

In a country where there are few corn-fields you may get the best sport at old blackcocks by judiciously beating the plantations on the sides of the hills, especially if there are birch and alder in them, the tender tops of which form a great part of their winter food. They are still more likely to frequent these belts if juniper-bushes are near; but great caution is necessary in beating them. After quietly taking your station at the upper side, send your man with an old and very steady pointer to the under; keep about thirty yards in advance of them: the man must remain outside the plantation, striking the trees with a stick, and making all the noise he can; the pointer must not, if possible, range out of his sight. You are thus pretty sure of the shot; but if your man beats through the belt, the birds are very likely either to fly straight forward, or out at the under side. Two brace of old cocks may be considered a good day's sport. If the plantations are very large, beat by sections in the same way.

Even in woodcock shooting in *large covers*, unless there are a number of guns regularly placed between the beaters, more harm than good is often done by a noisy crowd. I never take more than one attendant, my retriever, and an old pointer. When I get a point, I choose the most open place, and send my man to strike the bush on the opposite side; employing my retriever to beat any very thick cover near. This, however, he is

not allowed to do unless desired. Any man who adopts this plan will eventually be more successful than with beaters: more birds may of course be put up when a number of people are scouring the woods; but the shots will neither be so many nor so fair.

Black-game and grouse are easily tamed; ptarmigan, I believe, never. The keeper of the pheasantry of Rossdhu had a black-cock, a grouse, a partridge, and a pheasant confined together. They agreed pretty well, and the grouse, being a hen, hatched two successive seasons. The first year the whole of this cross-breed died; but the next, with great care, a couple were reared. They were both cocks, and, when come to their full plumage in winter, were a blackish brown, something between the colour of a grouse and a black-cock. They were presented by my late father to the Glasgow Museums, where they may now be seen. I have given in the frontispiece an accurate likeness of that in the College Museum.

Before ending this subject, I may put gentlemen on their guard against two ways of poaching grouse and black-game, I believe not generally known. The first is, hunting the young packs before the moors open, with a very active terrier or "colley." If the dog understands the business, he will chop a great many in a day. On a moor in Roxburghshire, I saw a sheep-dog, accompanied by a young farmer, performing to admiration. I

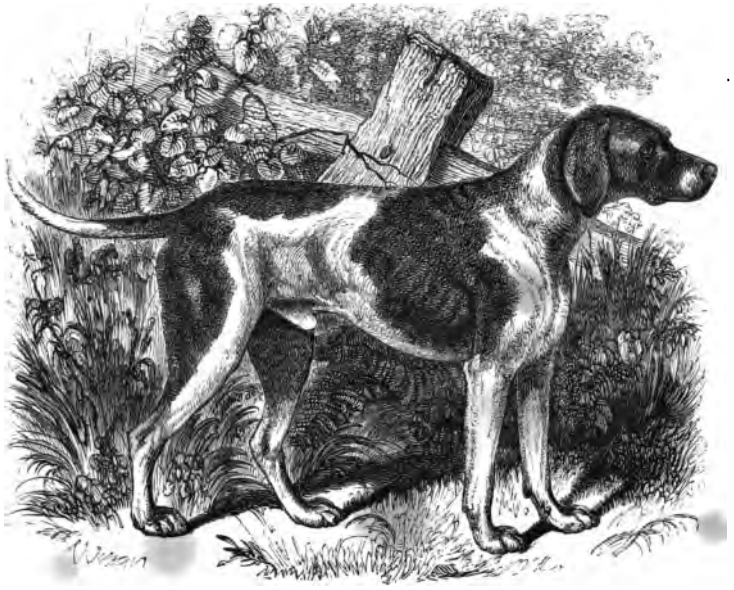
had the curiosity to watch their proceedings until I saw the dog snap a young grouse, quick as thought. The other plan is to set traps on the peat-stacks, or in the green springs where the birds come to drink and to eat small insects: this last may be continued all the season. We often hear that these traps are set in the former case for hawks, and in the latter for carrion crows. They may be, but any one who understands the habits of grouse and black-game, knows what birds they are most likely to catch; and if this way of destroying vermin is persevered in by the keepers, "the laird" will soon begin to shoot his grouse minus a leg.

DOGS FOR THE MOORS.

My advice on the subject of dogs must begin with the caution, never to lay too much stress on their general appearance. For my own part, I must confess that I am not very partial to the exceedingly fine-coated, silken-eared, tobacco-pipe-tailed canine aristocracy; for, even if their noses and style of hunting be good, they are invariably much affected by cold and wet weather, and can seldom undergo the fatigue requisite for the moors.

The most necessary qualifications of a dog are travel, lastiness, and nose. The two first are easily ascertained; but the other may not be found out for some time. I have seen dogs shot over for a season without committing many mistakes, and on that account thought excellent by their masters: their steadiness of course has been shown, but they have given no proof of first-rate nose. Even a good judge may be unable to form an accurate estimate of a dog's olfactory powers until he has for several days hunted him against another of acknowledged superiority. The difference may then be shown, not by the former putting up game, but by the

THIS, AS MAY BE SEEN, IS A VERY OLD DOG.



latter getting more points. Should there be no tip-top dog at hand to compete with, the only other criterion, though not at all an infallible one, is the manner of finding game. The sportsman must watch most narrowly the moment when the dog first winds: if he throws up his head, and moves boldly and confidently forward, before settling on his point, it is a very good sign; if, on the contrary, he keeps *pottering* about, trying first one side, then another, with his nose sometimes close upon the ground, even though at last he comes to a handsome point, I should think it most probable that he is a badly-bred, inferior animal.

Of all dogs, the worst for the moors is what is called a near ranger. Such flinchers may do well enough in preserved partridge ground, but on the steep hill it is quite sickening to see their everlasting canter fifteen or twenty yards on each side. The dog-breaker may say that although the dog ranges near, he is working as hard as his more high-mettled competitor. For my own part, I never saw one travel in that way that either worked so hard, kept it up so well, or *found half as much game* as a free-hunting dog.

Let your pointers be *first-rate*, and a couple will then be quite enough to hunt at a time; more only encumber.* If well broke, they will not pass over the near

* The only way to hunt two couple of dogs at the same time, without risk of slacking their mettle, or otherwise spoiling them, is for each couple

game, and when birds are scattered (the only time when the near-ranging *potterers* are in their element), will find them one by one, with equal certainty and greater despatch. Many gentlemen, however, take no trouble about procuring good dogs, until just before the season begins, and consequently must put up with inferior ones, in which case they are forced to hunt three or four together, or have little chance of finding game. And a most vexatious thing it is, after all, to see these cross-bred ill-broke curs uniting their efforts to annoy;—one putting up birds, another finding none, while a third contents himself with admiring the feats of his companions! "What's Bob doing?" "Nothing." "What's Don doing?" "Helping Bob!!" Aware of what he has to expect should he be unprovided, the knowing man of the moors has always as many *good* dogs as he can work himself, and never suffers them to be hunted or shot over by another.

The purchaser, before taking the trouble to try a dog, should make sure that he has a hard round foot, is well set upon his legs, symmetrically though rather strongly made; but the great thing is the head. It ought to be

to be commanded by a separate keeper, and at a sufficient distance apart to prevent interference. The sportsman can thus move from one to the other, as they find game. I, however, always prefer hunting my own dogs, and never suffer them to be spoken to by any one until I have fired, when I trust to my man to enforce the "down charge" *without noise*.

broad between the ears, which should hang closely down; a fall in below the eyes; the nose rather long, and not broad; nostrils very soft and damp. If these points are attended to, the dog will seldom have a very inferior nose. The above remarks relate principally to pointers, as I greatly prefer them to setters; but if the sportsman has a scanty kennel, I should rather recommend the latter, as they are often capable of undergoing more fatigue, and not so apt to be foot-sore. For my own part, however, I find the pointer so much more docile and pleasant to shoot with, that I never use setters; concerning the choice of which, as there are so many varieties, totally differing in appearance from each other, it would be useless to lay down any rules.

Many gentlemen, when the shooting season begins, are shamefully taken in by dog-breakers and others. Few are aware how difficult it is to know a good dog before he is shot over. The breaker shows his kennel, puffing it off most unmercifully. The sportsman chooses one or two dogs that suit his fancy; they drop at the sound of the pistol, and perhaps get a point or two, when birds are so tame that no dog but a cur could possibly put them up. The bargain is struck, the dog paid for; but, when fairly tried, shows his deficiency in finding game. I have seen the breaker look round with an air of the greatest triumph if a hare should start, and his dog not chase: this is what any man who under-

stands the elements of breaking, by a little trouble, and taking the dog into a preserve of hares, can soon effect.

Other obvious defects, such as not quartering the ground, hunting down wind, not obeying the call or signal, the veriest novice in field-sports will immediately detect. It is not, however, with faults so apparent that dogs for sale are generally to be charged. They are, for the most part, drubbed into such show subjection,* that the tyro fancies them perfect, and only finds out their bad breeding and nose after a week's shooting. To assist the judgment of the uninitiated, I have given accurate likenesses of the three best pointers I ever had. I know some faults might be found in them, but they have all the main requisites.

If your dogs are well bred, the great secret of making them first-rate on the moor is, never to pass over a fault, never chastise with great severity nor in a passion, and to kill plenty of game over them. There are two faults, however, to which dogs, otherwise valuable, are sometimes addicted; these give the sportsman great annoyance, but may often be more easily corrected than he is

* Dogs of this kind remind me of an anecdote I remember to have heard from a brother sportsman, but for the truth of which I cannot vouch:—Walking out with a high-broke pointer, he suddenly missed him, when he presently espied him soberly and submissively following the heels of an old Guinea-fowl, whose reiterated cry of "Come back! Come back!" he had thought it his duty to obey!!

aware. One is the inveterate habit, contracted through bad breaking, of running in when the bird drops. This trick is acquired from the breaker's carelessness, in not *always* making the dog fall down when birds rise, a rule which should never be neglected, on any pretence. *The steadiness of a dog, whether old or young, depends entirely upon its being rigidly observed.* After the fault of running in is once learned, the quickest remedy is the trash-cord and spiked collar; but many gentlemen buy dogs before shooting over them, and commence their day's sport without these appendages. They are thus obliged either to couple up the dog or run the risk of having any birds that remain, after the pack has risen, driven up, and those that have fallen mangled by him. I have seen dogs most unmercifully flogged, and yet bolt with the same eagerness every shot. It was easy to see the reason: the dog was followed by the keeper, endeavouring to make him "down;" there was thus a race between them which should reach the fallen bird.

The plan to adopt with a dog of this description is, when the grouse drops and the dog rushes forward, never to stir—coolly allow him to tear away at the game until you have loaded; by which time he will most probably have become ashamed of himself. You will now walk up most deliberately, and without noticing the bird take the dog by the ear, and pull him back to where

you fired, all the time giving several hearty shakes, and calling "down." When you get to the spot where you shot from, take out your whip, and between the stripes call "down" in a loud voice; continue this at intervals for some time, and, even when you have finished your discipline, don't allow the dog to rise for ten minutes at least; then, after speaking a few words expressive of caution, take him slowly up to the bird and lift it before his nose. If this plan is rigidly followed for several points, I never saw the dog that would continue to run in at the shot.

The other defect is chiefly applicable to young dogs; it is when they trust to their more experienced comrade to find the game, and keep continually on the outlook expecting him to do so. Nothing can be done for this but to pay the greatest attention to their point; selecting it in preference to that of the other dog, and always to fire, however small the chance of hitting the bird. Also change the dogs they hunt with as often as possible. Young dogs, with this treatment, will very soon acquire confidence, and never keep staring at their companion, unless he is settling upon a point.

When the sportsman rears his own puppies, he should be most particular, not only about the acknowledged excellence of the sire and dam, but also that their breeding is unexceptionable and *well known*—especially that there is no cross of the rough, *however remote*, when

breeding pointers, and no smooth blood when setters are the object. It sometimes happens that a dog, though not well bred, may turn out first-rate; but the progeny of such dog or bitch hardly ever do. This double caution is therefore most necessary, as otherwise much time and trouble might be spent upon a dog that never would be worth it, from a mistaken idea, that as his parents were excellent, he must *in the end* turn out well too.

To cross pointers and fox-hounds, or setters and spaniels, for the sake of improving the noses of the former or the travel of the latter, seldom answers. The one qualification *may* be gained, but the dog generally loses in every other.

The essentials of dog-breaking may be found in a pamphlet, published in London a few years ago, by the gamekeeper of Sir John Sebright. Although not agreeing with it in every particular, I certainly think it the best that has been written on the subject.

INSTINCT OF DOGS.

It is often amusing to hear those who know little about the subject describing the "almost reason" of the St. Bernard's dog, and not unfrequently of the Scotch "colley."

It appears to me that the instinct of these animals is more prominently forced upon their notice, and they do not take the trouble to watch and discover it in the other species. Sagacity is more equally distributed among the different varieties of the dog than such casual observers are aware of; but it, of course, takes different directions, according to the temper, habits, and treatment of the animal. It would be a waste of time so far to control the keen tempers of sporting dogs (by which I mean setters and pointers) as to make them perform the duties of a well-broke phlegmatic retriever. The instinctive power may therefore appear greater in one than the other; but from the quiet easy temper of the retriever, it is much less difficult to develop and make use of his instinct in that particular way: while the setter and pointer, owing to their more active life and hunting pro-

pensities, may often pass unnoticed, even by their masters, though, every time they are in the field, displaying as much tact as the most cautious retriever. Their sagacity is never thought of; and the only praise they get is, that they are "excellent dogs," which means *that they find plenty of game.*

There is another reason why sporting dogs appear more deficient in sense than some others, and that is their mode of life. Confined always in the kennel unless when seeking game, all their powers are employed to this end. There are, however, abundant proofs, that when made companions, and suffered to occupy a place upon the hearth-rug, they are capable of the same attachment, and would equal in sagacity the much-lauded dogs of St. Bernard.* Indeed, the usual mode of imprisoning sporting dogs is so great a disadvantage, that I have seen some with excellent noses and every requisite for the moors, grow sulky, and refuse to hunt with their usual freeness, unless left in a great measure to themselves. This, I know, arose partly from a want of proper management, and not keeping the medium between encouraging kindness and merited correction; for too much lenity is nearly as injurious to a dog as over

* May we not be allowed to suppose the dog in Helvellyn, whose attachment to its dead master was thought a fit subject for their muse by two great poets of the day, was of the sporting kind?—at all events it was "*not of mountain breed!*!"

severity: sulkiness will often be the effect in the one case, shyness in the other. Still, if the dog were allowed to be the companion of his master, he would both acquire sense and tact in half the time, and would not give half the trouble either by shyness or sulkiness; whereas it will generally be found, that a kennel dog is long past his best before he excels in that sagacity on the moor which so greatly assists him in finding game. Even the veriest village cur, when kindly treated and permitted to bask at the "inglenook," will learn all sorts of tricks, many of them requiring as much *reflection* as the most intricate duties of the shepherd's dog. I had a little cocker reared in a cottage, that of its own accord, when only seven months old, brought in the post-bag, thrown down by the mail in passing. The person who had charge of it, having been detained a little, was astonished to see the bag safely deposited in the house; and, upon watching next day, saw the little creature marching along with its load. It had seen the bag carried in once or twice, and immediately learned to do so.

I do not mean to deny that some varieties of the dog may excel others in sagacity—but this will be found in most cases to arise from other circumstances than the *natural gift*—and that dogs whose avocations require a phlegmatic, quiet temper, have certainly the advantage over others, though the instinctive powers of both, in the

first instance, may have been equal. A terrier, for example, may and has been taught to herd sheep, and if kept to this employment, would appear more sensible; but his snappish disposition (an advantage in his own more congenial occupations) renders him unlikely to excel in those of the colley. The latter again is admirably adapted for his own work; his thick, rough coat protects him from the severity of the weather to which he is constantly exposed, and his less ardent temper prompts him to look for guidance from his master in all his movements. Both sheep-dogs and terriers may be taught to point; but they are always deficient in *hunt,* and their olfactory powers are never so acute as in those dogs which nature seems to have formed for the purpose. We thus see that dogs are trained to different employments, for many qualifications apart from their instinctive powers, though these may be materially increased or retarded by the nature of their occupations.

The Newfoundland and water-dog are generally reckoned paragons of sagacity; but has their treatment nothing to do with this? From their earliest days taught to fetch and carry, and never leaving their master's side, they learn to understand his least signal, and from constant practice sometimes even anticipate his will. This is also precisely the case with the colley: as soon as it is able, made to follow the shepherd to the hill, and from every-day habit always on the alert to please him, it

daily acquires greater dexterity both in comprehending and obeying, till at last it can perform feats that perfectly astonish those who have not seen the gradual process. My retriever, already mentioned, has given many proofs of sagacity which have excited the admiration of those present; and yet I don't consider him at all more knowing than the old pointer, whose cut I have likewise given. A superficial observer would wonder at the comparison; but, independent of the tact and ingenuity displayed by the pointer in finding game, I feel convinced that if his educational advantages and temper had been the same as the retriever's, he would have equalled him *in his own beat.*

To illustrate my meaning, I may mention a feat or two of each:—Having wounded a rabbit on the moors when the pointer was behind a knoll, but fancying, from the agility with which it made its escape, that I had missed it altogether, I was surprised to see him shortly afterwards bring a rabbit and deliberately lay it down at my feet. It would have been nothing if the dog had been taught to fetch and carry; but, on the contrary, he is, of course, broke to drop at the shot and never to lay a tooth upon game. Had he seen me fire and afterwards stumbled upon the rabbit, he would from his breaking have thought he had no business to touch it; but, not having seen the shot, he fancied he had a right to bring what he had himself found upon the moor. Any person who was

no judge of dogs would have said, "Why, this is no more than what any retriever puppy would have done." It is not, however, the mere act alone, but the connecting circumstances which often show the superior instinct of the canine species.

The performances of the retriever are more showy, and the generality of observers would immediately on that account pronounce him the more sagacious dog. In taking a walk with him last winter, I met a friend who had dropped a whip: if this had happened to myself, there would have been no difficulty, as I had only to send the dog off upon my track; but upon trial, he immediately ran back upon that of my friend, recovered the whip, and brought it to me. Another time, when he was following an open carriage, a shawl was dropped; no one perceived the loss until the dog was seen carrying it in his mouth behind. Not long after a bouquet of flowers was missed: I immediately looked round for the retriever, and, to be sure, there he was with the bouquet most jauntily carried in his mouth. But perhaps the following instance may serve still better to show the influence of temper and education upon the instinct of dogs. Having taken sea-bathing quarters for my family, about forty miles from my residence in Perthshire, I walked there over the hills, accompanied by my faithful retriever. When I returned for a week's shooting, I ordered old "*Gruff*" to remain behind. After

waiting three days, and finding I did not come back as he expected, he started off one night about nine o'clock, made his way through the most intricate by-paths and short cuts of all descriptions, across a deep ferry, and arrived at home about five next morning, when he was discovered lying at the door. There are many authenticated accounts of dogs making much more distant journeys than this; but the point to be noticed is, his remaining three days, though perfectly at large, and then taking his departure. A keen-tempered dog would have started the next day, at latest, or, by having his attention engrossed with other things, have remained quietly where he was. Even in the former case, he would not have gained half so much credit for sagacity, as every one must have perceived that the patient retriever waited to see whether or not his master would return. Few would give themselves the trouble to remark that his education and apathetic temper favoured him in this particular, and that equal instinct might have been shown in the more hasty resolves and quicker movements of another. It is thus that keen dogs always appear deficient in sense, because they are hurried away by their temper from one thing to another; and their feats are seldom such as to arrest the attention or excite the wonder of the general observer. The instances I have given are merely mentioned as explanatory of my theory, viz., that we are apt to overvalue one dog for sagacity,

while we overlook its more unpretending neighbour, because, from shyness, surliness, eagerness of temper, or want of practice, all its powers of instinct and memory are employed in *a different and less obvious way;* for there is no doubt, if a dog is eager, shy, or sulky, it may have superior instinct, and yet *show less* than another of a more phlegmatic, sociable, or easy disposition. This accounts for the difficulty of procuring a good retriever from a cross between the water-dog and terrier, so valuable if the medium between them is preserved; because, when the dog partakes too much of the nature of the terrier, his quick temper unfits him for the purpose,* and when too little, he is generally deficient in nose. A cross between the water-dog and any others of the sporting kind would be still less likely to suit; and the Newfoundland is too large, and of the wrong colour. Perhaps (the noses of colleys and terriers being pretty much upon a par) a breed between a water-dog and colley might answer

* A dog of a very cool temper will retrieve wild-fowl better in loch-shooting, than another with quicker movements and perhaps a finer nose. Many of the cripples in this shooting take refuge in weeds and bushes, and the keen-tempered dog is apt to overrun them, thus losing time; whereas the other slowly tracks them one by one to their hiding-place. It must be recollected that I do not speak of coast and cover-shooting, where more agility is required: on the coast, from the numbers to be secured after a heavy shot of the stanchion gun; and in cover, that wounded hares and rabbits, winged pheasants, &c., may be more speedily retrieved. For my own part, I should prefer the slow dog even in cover; but few sportsmen like to wait.

well; there is only the objection, that the progeny might be too large and conspicuous.

With regard to the St. Bernard dogs, what is it they do but what almost any dog of *equal strength* might be taught also? It is certainly a noble occupation, but far, I should think, from difficult, to teach a dog to run the track of a man upon the bare mountain, and either guide or carry the benumbed wretch home. The colleys in the Highlands do the same when sheep are in jeopardy, and know their own flocks from any others. They will also climb hills and work by the slightest signal from their masters at the foot.* All this may appear very wonderful to any one unacquainted with the nature of dogs; and still more so when he sees the very colley which had excited his admiration, completely outdone in some *more domestic* feats of usefulness by a wretched turnspit.

If, therefore, my hypothesis be correct,—that there is not so much *real* difference in the instinct of dogs, but that the degree of sagacity they will exert for our benefit

* A shepherd of my late father, celebrated for having the best colleys in the country, preferred those with quick tempers, *to save himself trouble.* This man used to stand at the door of his hut, sending his dogs to "clear the marches," at the tops of the highest hills. They worked by signal long after they could not hear his voice. For this distant work, a slow dog, though more easily broke at first, and steady as a rock afterwards, was often found too lazy. The shepherd has known one lie down to rest for an hour behind a rock, when he thought himself unobserved. He therefore reserved these cool geniuses for the near work, and sent the younger and more keen-tempered on the distant and toilsome duty.

or amusement depends in a great measure upon their tempers and dispositions; and that the *treatment* they meet with has much to do in forming these tempers and dispositions,—it follows that too great care cannot be taken to train them properly, and especially *never to correct in anger or caprice.*

WILD-FOWL SHOOTING ON THE HIGHLAND LOCHS.

THE exciting nature of the winter shooting on one of our large Highland lochs, if well frequented by water-fowl, can hardly be conceived by a stranger to the sport. It, in fact, partakes so completely of the nature of deer-stalking, that a man who is an adept at the one would be sure, with a little practice, to be equally so at the other. I should have been astonished to find this amusement so little followed by gentlemen, had I not sometimes witnessed the bungling manner in which they set about it: it is, indeed, as rare to find a gentleman who knows anything of this sport as a rustic who has not a pretty good smattering of it. The reason is obvious. The squire, who may be a tolerable shot, is all eager anxiety until he can show off his right and left upon the devoted fowl; while the clod, having only his rusty single barrel to depend upon, and knowing that if the birds should rise, his chance is very considerably lessened, uses all the brains of which he is master in order to get the sitting shot; and knowing also from experience, that the nearer he gets to his game the better his chance,

RETRIEVER, FOR LOCH-SHOOTING.

spares no trouble to come to close quarters. He will crawl for a hundred yards like a serpent, although he should be wet through, reckless of his trouble and discomfort if he succeed in his shot.

I will now suppose the squire by the loch-side on a fine winter morning, dressed perhaps in a flaring green or black velveteen, with a Newfoundland retriever of the same sable hue. He sees a flock of fowl well pitched on the shore, which most likely have seen both him and his dog, and are quite upon their guard. He looks round for a few bushes to screen him *when near* the birds; and then with a sort of half-crouching attitude, admirably imitated by his canine friend, advances upon his game. Unless the place is particularly adapted for a shot, the flock have probably seen him appearing and re-appearing several times, and whenever he is sufficiently near to alarm them, fly up together to his no small chagrin. But should he *by any chance* get near enough for a shot, his dog, not being thoroughly trained, will most likely either show himself, or begin whimpering when his master prepares to shoot, or, in short, do something which may spoil the sport; and even supposing the better alternative, that he should have no dog at all, and be within shot of his game, he will, in all probability, either poke his head over a bush when going to fire, or make a rustling when putting his gun through it, and so lose the sitting shot.

Now for the few hints I have to offer. It may be thought that none were wanting, after the subject of wild-fowl shooting has been so well and fully discussed by Colonel Hawker; but I have never seen any suggestions to assist the beginner how to proceed in the winter shooting on our large Highland lochs; and many a man may have it in his power to enjoy the recreation in this way, who has neither opportunity nor inclination to follow it in all its glory on the coast with a stanchion gun and punt.

The man who engages in this sport must be of an athletic frame and hardy habits: he must not mind getting thoroughly wet, nor think of rheumatism while standing or sitting in clothes well soaked, perhaps for an hour at a time, watching fowl. As to waterproof boots, they are totally out of the question: the common diker's boots would so impede your walking, and also be such a hinderance when crawling upon ducks or running upon divers, as considerably to lessen your chance; and the India-rubber boots would, in no time, become so perforated with briers and whin as to be of little more service than a worsted stocking. The most suitable dress is a light brown duffle shooting-jacket and waistcoat, as near the shade of the ground and trees in the winter season as possible, your great object being to avoid the quick sight of the birds; shoes well studded with nails, like a deer-stalker's, to prevent slipping, and a drab-

coloured waterproof cap. Should the weather be very cold, I sometimes put on two pairs of worsted stockings, but never attempt any protection from the wet. If snow is on the ground, wear a white linen cover to your shooting-jacket, and another to your cap.

A gun suitable for this sport is indispensable. It certainly ought to be a double-barrel, and as large as you can readily manage; it must fit you to a nicety, and carry from two to three ounces of No. 3 or 4 shot, (I prefer the latter,) both very strong and regularly distributed. Its elevation must be most true, if anything over-elevated. As to length of barrel, calibre, &c., every man will, of course, suit his own fancy, and give his directions accordingly. Should he not be *au fait* at this, by explaining the sort of gun he wants to any of the first-rate makers, he need not doubt their giving him satisfaction, and none more so than William Moore. I never use any shot larger than No. 4, except for hoopers,*

* Wild-geese, bernacle, brent-geese, &c., seldom pitch upon the Highland lochs; the former only for a short time to rest.

Last winter (1841) some flocks of wild-geese, the common grey lag, appeared on Loch Lomond during the first storm. They remained about a week, and when seen, were always feeding on the shores. Three of them my brother killed. I never knew this to occur before; for although wild-geese have occasionally pitched for a short time, they always choose the deep inaccessible places of the loch, and, after resting for a few hours, took their departure without attempting to feed. I went to the loch shortly after the geese had left it, but the thaw unfortunately began the next day; and of the five days I remained, it rained nearly three: I, however, bagged thirty-eight head of wild-fowl, mallards, golden-eyes, dun-birds, wigeon tufted and scaup-ducks—my charge never exceeding 1¾ oz. of shot. It was a

(when, of course, I would sacrifice my chance at other birds,) as a fair shot at a small bird like a teal might be missed with larger; and a man should not go alarming the whole shore, firing random shots at flocks of fowl nearly out of reach on the water.

Next in importance to the gun is a proper retriever.*

curious fact that there were fewer hoopers last winter than in many of far less severity. Scarcely any came to Loch Lomond at all, and I did not see one, though I looked for them in all their most likely haunts. During the severe winter of 1837-8, not one wild-goose of any description was seen, although there were numbers of the common wild-swan, and a few of the black species, one of which was shot: so much for the uncertain movements of wild-fowl.

* My first attempts at shooting were in pursuit of wild-fowl when quite a boy, and I still consider it superior to any other sport. In these early days, however, I had no idea to what perfection a retriever might be trained; if the dog took the water well, and was close mouthed, I expected no more. As I was always obliged to lead him by my side, he often spoiled my best chances, either by showing himself, or hampering me when crawling over difficult ground. I was at last so disgusted with these encumbrances, that I generally dispensed with their services, and trusted to my own resources for recovering the killed and wounded. The consequence was, that the greater proportion of the latter always escaped, and unless the wind was favourable, not a few of the former were drifted away. On one occasion I was foolish enough to swim 100 yards into the loch in the middle of winter after a golden-eye, and had some difficulty in regaining the land. I had watched it for some time, and at last succeeded in getting to the nearest point on the shore. The golden-eye, however, was diving a long shot off, as these shy birds not unfrequently do: without once considering that the wind was blowing strong from the shore, I fired, and the bird dropped dead. To my great chagrin, it was blown rapidly out into the rough water. What was to be done? Had it been able to make the slightest effort to escape I could have allowed it; but there it lay, still as a stone. So, throwing off my shooting-jacket and shoes, I plunged in, waded up to the neck, and struck out for my prey. By the time I reached the bird, it had floated fully 100 yards; but getting its leg between my

The Newfoundland is not quite the thing: first, his black colour is against him—brown is much to be pre-

teeth, I wheeled about for the land. My difficulties now began, for the waves were very high and dashed right into my face. Several times during my slow progress I determined to leave the golden-eye to its fate, and as often braced myself up again, unwilling to have so cold a bath for nothing. At last I neared the shore, got into calm water, and, after sounding once or twice, struck ground, and reached terra firma with my prize, the leg of which I had nearly bitten through during my exertions. It was an intensely cold day about the end of December, with frequent snow-showers; and had the golden-eye not been the most valued of the diving race, I should never have made such a fool of myself. I arrived at home quite benumbed, determining no more to act the part of a retriever.

Another stormy mid-winter day, a farmer sent to let us know that a flock of wild-swans had appeared off the shore; my brother and I instantly started with our duck-guns. When we had reconnoitred with our glasses, from a rising ground, we saw that the flock were resting some hundred yards from the land, but had little doubt, from the high wind, that they would soon seek its shelter. We accordingly chose different stations, and crawling to them with the utmost caution, waited patiently for upwards of an hour. At last the swans, by imperceptible degrees, and much turning and wheeling, neared the shore, opposite my brother; but the water being shallow, they began to feed, as soon as their long necks could sound the bottom. He was thus forced to rush down to the edge, and take the distant shot. One lay badly wounded: had the wind been blowing towards the shore, the swan was so disabled that it could not have made head against it; but as it blew sideways, the creature managed to paddle itself out into the waves, every now and then uttering its wild piping cry. There was no boat nearer than a mile; we however set off at full speed, and with a shock-headed urchin at the helm, launched into the deep. The wind was blowing a perfect gale, the waves lashing over, wetting us to the skin, and every time we changed our course, we were in danger of being swamped. We had almost given up hope, especially as the white foam of the bursting waves was so exactly like the object of our search as to prevent our distinguishing it at any distance, when the "gilly" at the helm called out, "I hear him!" All eyes were strained in every direction, and the poor swan was at last seen rising over the billows like the spirit of the tempest. There was much difficulty, and some danger, in getting it safe on board, and in all probability we would never have perceived it, had it not betrayed

ferred: then, I should wish my dog occasionally to assist me in this inland shooting, by beating rushes or thick cover up creeks, where you may often plant yourself in an open situation for a shot, and your dog put up the fowl, which are almost certain to fly down past you. If you accustomed a Newfoundland to this, he might, from his strength and vivacity, learn the trick of breaking away when you did not wish him. The best and most efficient kind of dog for this work is a cross between a water-dog and large terrier;—the terrier gives nose, and the water-dog coolness and steadiness. I should say, that before you can procure one which upon trial may prove worth the great trouble of thoroughly training, you may have to destroy half a dozen. You should begin your training when the dog is *very young;* and, if you find he is not turning out as you could wish, seal his fate at once. The dog you want must be mute as a badger, and cunning as a fox: he must be of a most docile and biddable disposition—the generality of this breed are so: they are also slow and heavy in their movements, and phlegmatic in their temper—great requisites; but when fowl are to be secured, you will find no want either of will or activity, on land or water. The accompanying wood-cut may serve to show the sort of dog I mean,

itself by its dying song. My retriever would have recovered both these birds in five minutes, and there would have been no risk of his spoiling the shot beforehand.

being a likeness of the best I ever saw. He never gives a whimper, if ever so keen, and obeys every signal I make with the hand. He will watch my motions at a distance, when crawling after wild-fowl, ready to rush forward the moment I have fired; and in no one instance has he spoiled my shot. I may mention a proof of his sagacity. Having a couple of long shots across a pretty broad stream, I stopped a mallard with each barrel, but both were only wounded: I sent him across for the birds; he first attempted to bring them both, but one always struggled out of his mouth; he then laid down one, intending to bring the other; but whenever he attempted to cross to me, the bird left fluttered into the water; he immediately returned again, laid down the first on the shore, and recovered the other; the first now fluttered away, but he instantly secured it, and standing over them both, seemed to cogitate for a moment; then, although on any other occasion he never ruffles a feather, deliberately killed one, brought over the other, and then returned for the dead bird.

The only other essential to the sportsman is a glass; one of the small pocket telescopes will answer best, as it is of great importance to be able to set it with one hand while you hold your gun with the other, and the distance of a mile is all you want to command.

Having now equipped our wild-fowl shooter, we will

again bring him to the shore. His first object should be to see his game without being seen himself, even if they are at too great a distance to show signs of alarm. To effect this he must creep cautiously forward to the first point that will command a view of the shore for some distance; then, taking out his glass, he must reconnoitre it by inches, noticing every tuft of grass or stone, to which wild-fowl asleep often bear so close a resemblance that, except to a very quick eye, assisted by a glass, the difference is not perceptible. If the loch be well frequented, he will most likely first discover a flock of divers, but must not be in a hurry to pocket his glass, until he has thoroughly inspected the shore, in case some more desirable fowl may be feeding or asleep upon it. I will suppose that he sees some objects that *may* be wild-fowl. Let him then immediately direct his glass to the very margin of the loch, to see if anything is moving there; should he find it so, he may conclude that it is a flock of either ducks, widgeon, or teal; those first perceived resting on the shore, and the others feeding at the water's edge, of course not nearly so conspicuous.*

* Duck-shooting on rivers and streams is generally unsatisfactory, there are so many turnings and windings which prevent you from seeing the fowl until they are close at hand, also so many tiny bays and creeks, where they conceal themselves beyond the possibility of detection until the whirr of their wings and the croak of the mallard betray their hiding-place. Unless the river be large and broad, even the most expert wild-fowl shooter must expect few heavy sitting shots, and content himself with the greater number being distant flying ones.

If there is no motion at the margin of the loch, he must keep his glass fixed, and narrowly watch for some time, when, if what arrested his attention be wild-fowl asleep, they will, in all probability, betray themselves by raising a head or flapping a wing.

He must now take one or two large marks, that he will be sure to know again, as close to the birds as possible; and also another, about two or three hundred yards, immediately above, further inland. Having done this, let him take a very wide circle and come round upon his inland mark. He must now walk as if treading upon glass: the least rustle of a bough, or crack of a piece of rotten wood under his feet, may spoil all, especially if the weather be calm. Having got to about one hundred yards from where he supposes the birds to be, he will tell his retriever to lie down; the dog, if well trained, will at once do so, and never move. His master will then crawl forward, until he gets the advantage of a bush or tuft of reeds, and then raise his head by inches to look through it for his other marks. Having seen them, he has got an idea where the birds are, and will, with the utmost caution, endeavour to catch sight of them. I will suppose him fortunate enough to do so, and that they are perfectly unconscious of his near approach. He must lower his head in the same cautious manner, and look for some refuge at a fair distance from the birds, through which he may fire the deadly

sitting shot. After crawling serpent-like to this, he will again raise his head by hair-breadths, and, peeping through the bush or tuft, select the greatest number of birds in line; then drawing back a little, in order that his gun may be just clear of the bush for the second barrel, after having fired the first through it, will take sure aim at his selected victims. Should he unfortunately not find an opening to fire through, the only other alternative is by almost imperceptible degrees to raise his gun to the right of the bush, and close to it; but in doing this the birds are much more likely to see him and take wing. Never fire *over* the bush, as you are almost certain to be perceived whenever you raise your head: more good shots are lost to an experienced hand by a rapid jerk, not keeping a sufficient watch for stragglers, and over-anxiety to fire, than by any other way. Having succeeded in getting the sitting shot, the fowl, especially if they have not seen from whence it comes, will rise perpendicularly in the air, and you are not unlikely to have a chance of knocking down a couple more with your second barrel; but if they rise wide, you must select the finest old mallard among them, or whatever suits your fancy. Directly upon hearing the report, your retriever will rush to your assistance, and having secured your cripples, you will reload, and taking out your glass, reconnoitre again; for though ducks, widgeon, &c., would fly out upon the

loch at the report of your gun, yet the diver tribe, if there are only one or two together, are perhaps more likely to be under water than above when you fire; but more of them anon.

Another invariable rule in crawling upon ducks is always, if possible, to get to leeward of them;* for although I am firmly of opinion that they do not wind you like deer, as some suppose, yet their hearing is most acute. I have seen instances of this that I could hardly otherwise have credited. One day I got within about sixty yards of three ducks asleep upon the shore; the wind was blowing very strong, direct from me to them, a thick hedge forming my ambuscade. The ground was quite bare beyond this hedge, so I was obliged to take the distant shot through it: in making the attempt, I rustled

* If you have also a bright sun at your back, and in their eyes, your advantage is great; but should the sun and wind favour opposite directions, let the nature of the ground decide your advance.

I was last winter shooting wild-fowl with a gamekeeper who firmly held the common notion of their keen noses. We saw a flock of about twenty pitched upon a long point, and no possibility of approaching them except directly to windward. "Now, Sir," says the keeper, "if you 'll stalk these ducks so as to get a good shot, I 'll never care for their noses again!" They had the full benefit of the wind as it blew pretty strong, but there was some soft snow on the ground, which I knew would prevent their hearing; so I took him at his word, killed three with my first barrel, and, had they not been intercepted by the trees and bushes, would have knocked down at least one more with my second. The keeper has said ever since that their noses are not worth a straw:—my decided advice, however, is never to stalk wild-fowl to windward, *if it can be avoided*: for should the snow be at all crisp with frost, or if there are many twigs and bushes to crawl through, their noses become acute enough!!!

one of the twigs—up went the three heads to the full stretch, but when I had remained quiet for about five minutes, they again placed their bills under their wings; upon a second trial, the slight noise was unfortunately repeated: again the birds raised their heads; but this time they were much longer upon the stretch, and seemed more uneasy. Nothing now remained but to try again; my utmost caution, however, was unavailing, the birds rose like rockets. I never hesitate concealing myself to windward of the spot, where I expect ducks to pitch, feeling confident that, unless I move, they will not find me out. I have often had them swimming within twenty-five yards of me, when I was waiting for three or four in line, the wind blowing direct from me to them, without perceiving by any signs their consciousness of an enemy's vicinity.*

When the weather is very hard, and ducks are driven to the springy drains, a simple way of getting fair shots, but seldom practised, is, to make your man keep close to the drain, and take your own place fifteen yards from it, and about forty in advance of him. The ducks will then rise nearly opposite to you. To walk along the drain is

* Perhaps the sportsman may ask what it signifies whether wild-fowl are aware of your approach by hearing or winding? My answer is, that although it is of little consequence when crawling upon ducks, yet when lying concealed, expecting them to pitch, it is a considerable advantage to know that you will not be detected by their sense of smell; otherwise the best refuge for a shot must often be abandoned for a much worse.

not a good plan, as they will generally rise either out of distance or very long shots: and, if you keep a little way off, they may not rise at all. When the loch is low, the sportsman may often get a capital shot at ducks, the first warm sunny days in March, as they collect on the grassy places at the margin, to feed upon the insects brought into life by the genial heat.

But to return to our wild-fowl shooter, whom we left glass in hand looking out for divers. He sees a couple plying their vocation fifteen or twenty yards from the shore, about half a quarter of a mile from where he stands. He selects his vantage ground as near as possible for a last look before commencing his attack. Having gained this, he makes his dog lie down, and peeps cautiously until he sees the birds—waits till they both dive together, then rushing forward whilst they are under water, again conceals himself, expecting their reappearance. The great difficulty is always to keep in view the exact spot where the birds come up: once lose sight of it, your progress is stopped, and, in recovering your advantage, the birds are almost certain to see you and fly. When within one race of the divers, cock both barrels, and as soon as they *together* disappear, rush to the nearest point on the shore for a shot. If the day be calm, the rising bubbles will show where they are; you can then clap your gun to your shoulder, ready to fire. Always, in such cases, shoot on wing, and

be sure to fire well forward: should a diver only be winged, it is useless to tire your retriever in pursuit; but if he is at all struck about the legs also, a good dog should be able to secure him.

So much for the small morillon. The golden-eye is a still more artful bird, and requires more caution. If, without seeing an enemy, he is at all alarmed while diving near the shore, he will probably swim out to a considerable distance; reconnoitring all the time, and making a noise something like a single note of the hurdy-gurdy. You may perhaps expect his return, and wait for him; but although he may remain about the same place, making these calls, and apparently careless, he is all the time very suspicious; and I only once or twice, in my whole experience, knew him return to the spot where he was first discovered. Should he get sight of you, there is no hope, even if he does not take wing, which he most likely will. The little morillon may return, if you think him worth waiting for; but he is so hard and coarse on the table, that it would be paying him too great a compliment. The golden-eye, on the contrary, is a great delicacy—a sufficient proof, I think, were there no other, that morillons are not young golden-eyes, as many suppose. This supposition, I have little doubt, arises from the colour of the female golden-eye being pretty much like that of the morillon. The shape, however, is different, and the size of the female golden-eye

nearly equal to that of the male. I have shot them, right and left, when diving together, the female being the most wary of the two. The morillon may be in the same flock, as different kinds of divers often are; but there is not half the caution required to get a shot at him, and, when compared, he is much rounder in shape and one-third smaller in size. It may be said, "and why should not this be the young of the same species?" I answer, "that the young males of all the duck tribe that breed in this country, from the mallard to the teal, gain their bright feathers the first moulting, after which the young males are at least equal in size to the females: but my chief reason I have already given, if the morillon is the young bird, why should he reverse the usual order of things, and be less tender and delicate than his parents?"

When several are diving together, you must get as near as possible without alarming them; and, selecting a couple who dive at the same moment, hoot away the others, who will be far out of reach before their companions come up. They will probably never miss them until they have taken two or three dives, thus giving you an opportunity of getting the shot; of which you would have had a much worse chance while they were together.

In recommending this, be it observed, I am supposing the ground of difficult access; when favourable, even a

novice should be able to get within a run of any number of fowl, without being seen by the most wary of the flock, and can then make his selection. For my own part, I hardly ever adopt this plan, but where the ground is bare and open, an unpractised wild-fowl shooter would stand no chance otherwise.

When the flock is large, it always puzzles a beginner to ascertain the length of time they are under water, in order to know what time he may *safely* allow for his last run, which in such a case must generally be a long one. The fowl are continually coming up and disappearing again, which confuses him, and *unless he knows the depth of the water,* the only way to find out how long they are under, is to watch the most marked or detached of the flock, and then choose his devoted pair. *If the water is very shallow,* those below are sure to perceive the flurry made by their friends at the top, as soon as you commence your last run, and instantly join them in their retreat. In such cases it is always best to try for a distant sitting shot, from the nearest refuge you can safely reach, among as many as you can get in line. But by attempting this, there is always a risk of losing the chance altogether, and it should never be resorted to except under such circumstances, or with *dun-birds,* who keep more close together, and thus present a better opportunity for a heavy sitting shot than any other divers.

Of all wild-fowl, a flock of dun-birds is the most

agreeable to the sportsman's eye. They are the most stupid of all the diver race: I have even seen them, after having been driven from their feeding-ground, return in the face of the shooter, who had only lain down without any covering or concealment whatever: they have begun diving again within thirty yards, and of course given him a capital shot. I never wish for assistance in manœuvring any other kind of water-fowl, but these may be herded like sheep; and, if feeding on one side of a bay, you have only to conceal yourself at the other, and send your man round to where they are diving. They will most likely come straight towards you, and, again beginning to feed, will probably every five or ten minutes draw all together with their heads up. Now is your time to fire, if you have the good fortune to be within shot; but should you prefer two birds in the hand to waiting for their knitting together, you may have a capital right and left when they come up from diving: I, however, should be loath to lose the opportunity of the sitting shot.

There are many other divers that frequent our lochs, such as the tufted and scaup-ducks, &c., but they may all be approached in the same way as the golden-eye and morillon; none are so shy as the former.* Those that

* Last winter I had a good opportunity of contrasting the artful and suspicious nature of the golden-eye with that of the more confiding morillon. When shooting wild-fowl on the banks of the Teith, I discovered, with my

feed on fish, such as the goosander, speckled diver, sheldrake, &c., require rather different tactics. To get a shot at any of these, you must watch which way they are feeding, and, taking your station somewhat in advance, wait until they pass you: they will not keep you long, as they are very rapid in their movements. Take care that the water is pretty deep where you place yourself, or they may dive at too great a distance from the shore for a shot; but, after all, they are good for nothing but to be stuffed for a collection.

The only other bird that requires a separate notice is the mighty hooper, monarch of the flood. To get a shot at the wild-swan is the great object of the sportsman's desire: he is not naturally so shy a bird as the wild-duck,

glass, a golden-eye feeding at the top of a long creek, and a couple of morillons at the bottom where it joined the river. As they were at some distance from each other, it was impossible to keep an eye upon both. So, knowing that if the golden-eye got a glimpse of me, he would not stay to take another, I was obliged to trust to the simplicity of the more social morillons. I got within a fair distance for my last run, when the morillons, who had caught a transient glance at my manœuvres, paid the compliment of giving me their undivided attention; but, as they did not leave the ground, nor show any other sign of alarm, I was congratulating myself that all was safe. The moment, however, that the golden-eye came up from the dive, he perceived that the morillons were resting on their oars, and instantly was on his guard. It was most curious to see the cunning and tact of the creature, which I had every advantage for observing, as I was well concealed. He kept cruising about, with outstretched neck, peering first on one side of the creek, then on the other, always selecting the best points of sight to halt, and make his observations. Nor would he recommence his repast until the morillons had set him the example. And, had I not known his usual precaution of making the first dive or two, after being scared, very short, he might even then have escaped.

but still his long neck, and acute sense of hearing, render great caution necessary. If, as often happens, he is feeding along the shore, you have only to plant yourself in an advantageous situation a good way ahead, and it will not be long before he makes his appearance; but if he is feeding at the mouth of some brook or stream, you must crawl in the same way as when after wild-ducks. Should you get within a distant shot of a hooper, and are not close to the water-side, instead of firing from where you are, rush down to the edge of the loch, and before the swan can take wing, you will have gained ten yards upon him. When the thaw begins after very hard weather, they are almost sure to be feeding at the mouths of any mountain burns that run into the loch. Should you see hoopers feeding greedily, nearly out of range of your gun, in place of taking the random shot, try to prevent their being disturbed, and return at dusk of evening or grey of morning, when they will most likely have come pretty close to the shore, especially if any little rivulets run into the loch near: this rule applies to most water-fowl. If a swan be alarmed by an enemy on shore, his wont is not to fly, but to swim majestically away.

Widgeon and teal are approached in the same way as wild-ducks, only the widgeon are less shy than the ducks, and the teal than the widgeon. You may sometimes, in calm weather, see widgeon in a large flock purring and whistling a couple of hundred yards from the shore;

you need give yourself no trouble about them, as they will probably not leave their resting-place until they feed in the evening. Always try to get a heavy shot at widgeon, which, with a little patience, you may generally accomplish. Teal are usually in small flocks; so that, if you can get two or three in line, you had better fire, for fear of losing the sitting chance altogether. I once killed six at a shot; but, except when they collect in small ponds and drains about the loch-side, so good an opportunity seldom occurs. I have occasionally seen shovellers on our lochs; but only in the hardest winters. They resemble wild-ducks in their habits: the only one I ever shot was among a flock of ducks.

Good sport need never be expected when the loch is large, as many of the fowl swim up creeks, and among the morasses in shore, where it is difficult even to get a flying shot; while those that remain on the margin of the loch are so concealed by the bushes, &c., that it is quite impossible to see them. The lower the loch the better; at all events, the shore should be clearly defined. At such times wild-fowl have always favourite haunts for feeding and resting.

There is a common saying, that specimens of all the different kinds of water-fowl which frequent the loch in winter, present themselves during the harvest-moon. This is erroneous; for even the morillon, earliest of the diver tribe, seldom appears so soon, and the tufted and

scaup-ducks, dun-birds, &c., never until the winter sets in. Multitudes of wild-ducks do come down from the moors, during harvest, to feed upon the corn-fields on the banks of some of the larger lochs, and, when the stubble becomes bare, return to the moor-lochs until these are frozen over, which again drives them back. This is the only foundation for the vulgar error. A day or two is generally sufficient to freeze over these little lochs, and their occupants then come down to the larger ones, the greater parts of which remain open long after the storm has set in. Now is the time for the wild-fowl shooter: if the ground is covered with snow, so much the better. The fowl are then in groups close to the shore, pinched with cold and hunger, seeking shelter and a scanty morsel. If at the same time it is windy, with drifts of snow, no weather can be more propitious for ducks, widgeon, teal, and all wild-fowl that feed at the margin. When the snow is falling thick and fast, a capital sitting shot may sometimes be obtained, though the ground be so bare as to offer no concealment. In most cases, however, it is best not to take the cover off your gun till the shower moderates a little, as snow is so apt to penetrate, and make it miss fire.

If the weather be open, the higher the wind the better, as it drives to the shore whatever fowl are upon the loch, although until the frost sets in they will be comparatively few.

The most auspicious weather for divers is one of those frosty days, accompanied by mist, when the loch is perfectly calm, and looks like a mirror dimmed by one's breath. You may then hear their plash in the water—sometimes even before they can be seen—and, if care is taken to make no rustling among the bushes, when they are above water, you have every prospect of a good chance. The smoothness of the surface and the mist makes each bird appear twice as large as it is, which enables you much more easily to catch sight of them coming up from the dive. The mist is also an excellent shroud if the ground is open, without a bush or tuft of reeds to hide behind, when the birds are above water.

The wild-fowl shooter must never forget that true proof of his skill consists in obtaining *sitting* shots, and stopping a number of fowl at one discharge; and, unless with divers, must not think of a flying right and left.

As an instance of what may be done by patience and caution, I may conclude this paper by mentioning, that the gamekeeper of a relation, having seen a flock of ducks pitched upon the shore, and no way of getting near them but over a bare field, crawled flat upon his face a distance of three hundred yards, pushing his gun before him, not daring even to raise his head, and at last got within such fair distance, that he stopped four with

his first barrel, and one with the other, securing them all. His gun was only a small fowling-piece. I should add that he had been trained to deer-stalking, under his father, from a boy.

DEER-STALKING.

THIS first of British sports can only be enjoyed by the few Highland proprietors who still maintain their forests, and those to whom their permission is extended. Still if the many keen sportsmen who are panting to try their rifles upon a gallant stag were thoroughly entered at deer-stalking, they might find less cause to regret their privation than they now imagine. In the first place, no sport is more ruled by the weather: again, one is so dependent on the skill and tact of the stalker, in whose hands, for some time at least, you must be content to act like a mere puppet. And when the deer are driven, a single false move, or the mistaking of a signal by the hill-men employed, may spoil all. In every other kind of shooting, the sportsman ought to trust to his own resources and foresight; but in deer-stalking, unless he has passed his life in the forest, and is thoroughly acquainted with every corrie, crag, and knoll, he had much better trust to those who are. Without this knowledge it is impossible for any one to tell how the wind will blow upon a given point: sometimes it may be north on

one side of a hollow and south on the other; and I have seen the mist moving slowly in one direction along the hill-side, and half an hour afterwards the very reverse, without any change in the wind. To account for this on the spur of the moment would often puzzle the scientific, but the unlettered hill-man, who has only been taught by the rough experience of the crag and the blast, though unable to talk theoretically on the subject, yet, from constant and acute observation, will confidently predict the result; and, taking advantage of every shifting change, bring you within fair rifle distance of the unsuspecting herd.

To a novice, even though an expert rifle-shot, the first sight of "the antlered monarch of the waste" will almost take away the power of hitting him. But to any one accustomed to the sport and constantly practising it, the sameness abates somewhat of its intense interest: for it admits of no variety but the age and dimensions of the stag. In wild-fowl shooting the excitement is kept alive by the various kinds of game that present themselves, from the magnificent hooper to the tiny teal. On the grouse mountains there is often the uncertainty whether the next point may be the red or the "jetty heath-cock," or whether a twiddling snipe may spring, or an Alpine hare start unexpectedly before you. It is the same uncertainty which gives zest to cover-shooting. The golden-breasted pheasant, the russet woodcock, the

skulking hare or dodging coney, may all successively appear.

I do not mean by the above remarks to depreciate deer-stalking. It is sport for princes. I only offer them as consolation to those who undervalue the amusement within their reach, by exaggerated ideas of that above it.

No man with good nerves need despair of becoming a tolerable rifle-shot, as the great art is to take plenty of time; in fact, to shoot as coolly at a deer as at the target. The American backwoodsmen with their ill-balanced rifles can hit the jugular vein of an animal feeding or moving about, with unerring accuracy, at thirty or forty yards. Every one must see how much this depends upon nerve and coolness, and these settlers are taught the self-command, which is the basis of their dexterity, from their earliest years. I recollect being shown, by the owner, a rifle which he considered a *chef-d'œuvre* of American workmanship. The most cool-headed forester of our country would have been puzzled to do much execution with it at first. It looked and felt exactly like a toy, with its peaked and silver-mounted toe and heel-plate, long unbalanced barrel, and ludicrously small bore. Our rifles, on the contrary, are beautifully poised, and their weight enables us to take a much steadier aim at a long distance, when the ball, from being much larger, is less affected by the wind. I dare say, however, if a

Highland deer-stalker and American wood-ranger, both finished adepts in their own way, were fairly matched, each would have a sovereign contempt for the dexterity of the other.

I have constantly observed that the performers most to be depended on with the rifle are what are called "poking shots;" for although the first-rate hand with the fowling-piece may often bring down the deer running in admirable style, yet upon any unexpected fair chance presenting itself, he is apt to fire too quick, forgetting the different style of shooting which is required for a rifle; while the slow man, however taken unawares, always gives himself time for deliberate aim. Any one, also, who has been practising much at snipe, or other quick shooting, will, unless quite on his guard, be almost certain to miss the deer until his hand is brought in, after which, when he again returns to the snipe, they will stand a better chance of escape, from the poking manner in which he will at first be inclined to fire at them. As a boy, I remember being much perplexed to see a gamekeeper miss a fair shot at a deer, when a few days before he had killed seven swifts out of eight flying past at "full bat;" while his father, the old forester whose likeness I have given, could scarcely have touched one, and yet seldom missed a rifle-shot. There was another man who generally accompanied them in their stalking expeditions, and whose shooting was a still greater puzzle. Although

not left-handed, he shot from the left shoulder, being unable to close his left eye, and was as slow a performer as ever pulled a trigger. Flying shots he invariably missed, and, at last, seldom fired at; but ground game, except rabbits, had no chance with him. Nothing could flurry or put him out of his shooting. If the shot was not intercepted, and he was only allowed plenty of time, it was certain death.

I had twice an opportunity of seeing these three men fairly tested with the rifle. Some deer being discovered near the top of a high hill, it was arranged, as all their passes were well known, to drive them with some shepherds and their colleys. My brother and I begged hard to join the party, and were placed under charge of the gamekeeper, whose pass was one of the best. Before starting, however, the left-shouldered man wished to fire off an old load, being afraid to risk it at the deer. It was suggested that he should shoot at a hare. We had not gone far when one rose about forty yards off. Even now I think I see the cool way in which he raised his rifle, and, allowing poor puss a free stretch of thirty yards, fired. The hare dropped dead, and, when we went up, she was fairly struck between the shoulders. After a time we were safe in our passes, and the driving-party commenced their manœuvres. We soon heard the yelp of the dogs, and, shortly after, the floundering of a deer in some mossy ground immediately above the pass. Presently

it made its appearance, crossing us at about sixty yards' distance. It was a beautiful chance. Taking deliberate aim, the gamekeeper fired. To our astonishment and chagrin, the deer which had been moving slowly along, bounded forward, frightened enough, but unhurt. No other chance was obtained till near the end of the day, when the old forester fired a tremendous long shot, and struck the deer, which ran for a few hundred yards, and then dropped.

Another time, when the deer had taken the water, there was a general scramble to the shore; a boat was quickly procured, which the cunning animal no sooner saw bearing down than it turned short round, and was within a few yards of grounding, when the three aforesaid stalkers were ready to fire within fair distance. The left-handed man took deliberate aim at the head, the only part above water, and cut off the horns close to the skull. The deer now struck ground, and when bounding along the shore was missed by the gamekeeper, but immediately brought down in admirable style by his old father. That a man could miss a deer, and yet knock down double shots one after another at game, used to appear a complete problem to me; especially as one of his rivals could not hit a bird at all, and his father as a game-shot was not to be named in the same day with him. After a little practice myself, the solution was plain. I have seen this old man in his *eightieth year,*

bring down a deer *running*, and last season had some venison sent me, killed by him, when ninety-one years old!!

As I consider this forester the finest specimen I ever met with of a Highlander of the old school, I may perhaps be allowed to mention some of his peculiarities apart from his professional avocations. His words like his shooting are slow, but sure to tell. When addressing his superiors, his manner is marked by the greatest courtesy, without the least approach to servility. He is well read in ancient history, knows all about the siege of Troy, and talks with the greatest interest of Hannibal's passage over the Alps. On one occasion, when several gentlemen were talking on a disputed point of history, he stepped forward, begged pardon for interrupting them, and cleared it up to their utter amazement. His memory is still excellent, and nothing gives him greater delight than old traditions, legends, &c. The last time I saw him, he gave us an account of some of the Roman Catholic bishops of Scotland with characteristic anecdotes. In politics he has his own peculiar opinions, is particularly jealous of the encroachments of the "Great Bear" as he calls Russia, and thinks the allies committed an irreparable error in not partitioning France after the battle of Waterloo. No present finds greater favour than the last Newspaper; and it is curious to see the old man devour-

ing its contents without spectacles. He would not be a true Highlander were he not a firm believer in all their superstitions. Two instances of second-sight he related to me as having happened to himself; although he is very unwilling to talk upon the subject, and I have often noticed his evasive replies to those who questioned him. I premise my account, by saying, that wherever he is known, his word has never been doubted, and I would believe it as implicitly as that of the proudest peer in the realm. One day, when returning very tired from some sporting expedition, he met an acquaintance, accompanied by a young man whom he also perfectly well knew. The first stopped to ask "what sport;" he gave a short answer over his shoulder, and saw the young man walk on. That afternoon he heard he had been killed by a fall from his cart, at the very time of this rencontre. Upon questioning his companion the next day, he said there was no person with him. The other instance happened one rainy evening when looking over his kennel. He saw a man with a grape cleaning out the gutter, and called to know who had desired him to do so. The gutter-cleaner walked slowly towards him, but something having arrested his attention in the mean time, he lost sight of him, and could not make out how he had disappeared; upon inquiring of the overseer, he said this man was unwell and confined to bed.

He shortly afterwards recovered, which was sufficient confirmation to the old forester of the truth of his vision, for in all cases of second-sight, where the object approaches, it is a sure sign of recovery, and when it recedes, of death. Another of his prejudices is the lucky or unlucky "first foot." Half the people of the country were one or the other with him. There was a canty old carle of a herd whose happy cheerful face was enough to banish care from every other brow; but the old forester had unfortunately met him on the morning of some unlucky day. Now as it happened that this conscientious old herd, whose boast it was "I never did ahint ma maister's back what I wad na do afore his face," was generally one of the earliest astir; he was oftener the "first-foot" than any other body, and as he came crooning some old Gäelic song, with his staff over his shoulder, and gave his blithe salutation, "Goot mornin, goot mornin; goot sport, goot sport!" a stranger would wonder at the look of gloom which overshadowed the forester's face, and the scarcely articulate grunt which was his only reply, sometimes followed by the half-muttered exclamation, "Chock that body!" To shoot a wild-swan was reckoned a most unlucky feat. One severe winter, when after water-fowl with another man, four hoopers were discovered close to the shore. His companion eagerly pointed them out, when the old forester, who had most likely seen them first, coolly

replied, "You—see,—John,—we 'll—just let them alone!" The only thing not truly national about him was substituting a pinch of snuff for a quid of tobacco, and when out on the hills he has often expressed his belief, that the moss-water he was sometimes obliged to drink would long ago have been the death of him had he not always followed it up by the antidote of a pinch which "killed all the venom."

But the character of my old friend has beguiled me into too long a digression. I must now return to the rifle.

Every man before firing at deer must be thoroughly acquainted with his own, a point even more important with a rifle than a shot-gun. Under eighty yards, it will most likely shoot a little high; and if the wind is at all strong, it will alter the direction of the ball fully a foot at a hundred yards, for which allowance must be made. The best place to hit a deer, unless he is lying down, and so close as to tempt one to try the head, is just behind the shoulder. If struck fair, he will most likely bound forward ten or twenty yards, and then drop. One that I shot ran fifty yards before it fell, although the lower part of the heart was touched. When this occurs, you may be sure it will never rise again. If, on the contrary, it falls instantaneously, unless shot through the head, neck, or spine, it may very possibly spring up on a sudden, and perhaps escape altogether. If struck

too far back, a deer may sometimes run for half a day, and the wound has even been known to heal up, but is more likely to prove fatal the next day. When a deer is discovered lying down, in such a situation that he might dip out of sight the moment he rises, and only his horns visible, the sportsman should advance with extreme caution until the deer hears him, when he will most likely slowly raise and turn his head before springing up. Now is the time to shoot him between the eye and the ear.

The most propitious day for deer-stalking is a cloudy one with blinks of sunshine; exactly such as you would choose for fishing. When the sky is cloudless, and the sun very dazzling, the herd are apt to see you at a great distance, and take alarm. High and changing wind is always very bad, as it keeps them moving about in a wild and uneasy state. In such weather it is better, if possible, to wait till it settles a little, and take advantage of the first calm. If the breeze be light, they will not move much, but a strong steady wind lasting for some days will always make the deer change their ground, by facing it often for miles. Mist is the worst of all, as the deer are pretty sure to see *you* before *you* see *them*. Always advance on deer from above, as they are much less apt to look up than down a hill. If possible, have the sun at *your back*, and in *their face*. With this advantage you may even venture to approach them from

below. (Birds, on the contrary, always look up, and it is best to stalk *them* from lower ground.) If it is a quiet shot, and the sun is at your back, wait for a clear blink before making your near approach. Of course every one knows, that it is out of the question, *under any circumstances*, to attempt advancing on deer unless the wind be favourable, so all other directions are subject to this.

In corries and hollows it is quite impossible to know how the wind will blow upon a particular point, *unless you have marked every change of wind upon every point of the corrie.*

The quick sight of a skilful forester in first discovering deer will appear miraculous to a stranger to the sport, and unless quite bewildered, he cannot fail to admire the generalship which follows. The whole ground is as perfectly known to his guide as his own pleasure-grounds to himself. Every hollow, every knoll, is taken advantage of; every shifting turn of the wind, up the one or round the other, is surely predicted, until, to his own utter amazement, the panting Sassenach or Lowlander is told that he is within fair rifle-distance of a bevy of noble harts.

After deer have been stalked and shot at, they become much wilder; the best sport at the old harts is therefore obtained at the beginning of the season. They generally keep together, and when their stately mien and

branching antlers are seen in the distance, it is enough to inspirit the most apathetic ; but when told to cock his double-barrelled rifle for a shot, I could well excuse a novice for being scarcely able to obey. When there are hinds in the herd they often present themselves between you and the unsuspecting harts ; but even should they be at a distance, great caution is necessary, as, if one hind gets a glimpse of the crouching enemy, the whole herd, stags and all, are sure to scamper away, amidst the bitter execrations of the forester upon its hornless head.

The next best time for a shot at a fine old stag, after they have become wild, is about the beginning of October, when each lot of hinds is sure to contain a good hart. The chances then may often not be so good, but from the stags being dispersed, there are more of them. If deer are feeding forward, it requires very nice calculation, when at a distance, to know the point they will arrive at, by the time you have neared them, especially as a shower of rain or a gust of wind will quicken their motions. But if the stalker is not far from the herd, which is feeding up to his place of concealment, with a favourable wind, he should not grudge waiting ; for, by sending round drivers to windward of the deer, they are often apt to turn and face them. I can't say that driving, under any circumstances, gives half the pleasure that stalking does ; for my own part, I would rather kill one stalked hart than several driven. Driving, however,

upon a large scale has a most imposing effect, and, although it cannot be otherwise than injurious to a forest, yet the exhilarating nature of the whole proceedings, in which so many friends may join, often makes the proprietor overlook the consternation and panic it creates among the wild and timid herd. Some part of the forest is selected to which the deer are to be driven; a great number of hill-men and shepherds, who thoroughly understand what they are about, are then sent to the furthest extremity to bring all the deer they can collect to this spot; the passes, of course, being well known, are occupied by the sportsmen with their rifles. The drivers sometimes hallooing, and sometimes giving their wind, gradually contract their circle, the deer are huddled together, and finding the only clear ground in the direction of the rifles, slowly and cautiously take their doomed way. There is often great difficulty in driving them, as they are always obliged to go with the wind, which their natural instinct of self-preservation makes them very unwilling to do, and, if they possibly can, they always face it. When the herd come within distance of the rifles, great mischief often ensues; the nervous and indifferent shot firing into the centre of the living mass, while even the experienced deer-stalker, in singling out the stag-royal, may sometimes wound a couple of hinds beyond him.

So much for driving on grand occasions, which gives

the shooter a tolerably snug sinecure until the game comes up to his hand. But when it is practised in a small way, there is no sport which more calls into play his pluck and endurance of fatigue. He first climbs to the ridge of the hill, where he is at once seen by the hawk-eyed driver who has taken his station near the foot, or on the opposite brow, and marked with his glass every herd at feed or rest on the face below. As soon as he has selected one, he attempts to drive it up the hill, towards the sportsman, either by hallooing or showing himself; at the same time giving warning by the manner of his halloo which way they are likely to take. The sportsman must be thoroughly acquainted with all the passes, or have some person with him who is; and, running from one "snib" to another, in obedience to the signal below, catch sight of the horns of the herd, as, with serpentine ascent, they wind their wary way. From the zigzag manner in which they often come up, it is very difficult to make sure which pass will be the favoured one, and I have been within a few hundred yards of the antlers when the prolonged shout from below has warned me that I had an almost perpendicular shoulder of the hill to breast at my utmost speed before I could hope to obtain the much-desired shot. If the wind is at all high, so determined are the deer to face it, that, unless there are a great number of drivers, one herd after another may take the wrong direction, but, if the day is favour-

able, with only a light breeze, a knowing driver or two will generally manage to send them up to the rifle. When the deer have selected their pass, should you be within fair distance, with both barrels cocked, beware of making the slightest motion, *especially of the head*, until you mean to fire. Even when perfectly in view, if you lie flat and don't move, the herd are almost sure to pass. One or two hinds generally take the lead. The fine old harts, if there are any in the herd, often come next, but sometimes, if very fat and lazy, they lag in the rear. When the first few hinds have fairly passed, the rest are sure to follow, until their line is broken, and their motions quickened by a double volley from the rifle.

When stalking last September in Glenartney forest by the kind permission of the noble owner, I had as fine a chance as man could wish spoiled by the scarcely audible whimper of a dog. I was placed in a most advantageous spot, within near distance of the pass. Presently an old hind came picking her stately steps, like a lady of the old school ushering her company to the dining-room. Next her came a careless two-year-old hart, looking very anxious to get forward, and perfectly regardless of danger. All was now safe, I felt sure of my shot; when, horror of horrors! a slight whimper was heard. The old hind listened, halted,

and then turned short round upon the young hart, who instantly followed her example, and the whole herd ran helter-skelter down the hill. The unfortunate sound proceeded from one of the forester's two colleys, the only dogs Lord Willoughby allows in the forest; they are kept for the purpose of bringing to bay any deer badly wounded, and are never slipped upon other occasions. The mar-plot above alluded to is an old dog, and very good for the purpose; he had winded without seeing the deer—hence his mistake.

Glenartney is a beautiful little forest, walled round by fine green hills, but the deer being too numerous for its extent, are rather small. It also stands high, and is not so well sheltered as might be desired, on which account the deer, when the winter storm sets in severely, although fed to the full, cannot remain to eat their food, and are obliged to seek the shelter of the woods for many miles round, far beyond their bounds. At night they wander to the turnip-fields for sustenance, where numbers are shot by poachers, who watch the gates and openings into the fields. One man boasted to me that he had in that manner killed six during one storm, with a common fowling-piece loaded with ball. The turnip-field where he performed this feat was more than twelve miles from the forest.

Perhaps as fine deer as any in the kingdom are those

of the Black Mount. The cup* on the top of the horns of many, according to Highland phrase, would hold a gill of whisky; and yet there are heads now preserved in Taymouth Castle which show that their forefathers, though fewer in number, were even greater than they. The Black Mount is twenty-one miles long by twelve broad, and the Marquis of Breadalbane, notwithstanding his numerous engagements in public life, has not neglected this noble appanage of a Highland proprietor. No expense or trouble is spared which can contribute to the winter subsistence of the deer, or protect them from poachers. Patches of different kinds of food are sown in the valleys, and left uncut, to which they flock during the severity of winter. The forest has plenty of green summer food, and abundance of long heather, which affords shelter in cold weather, and is greedily eaten in the snow-storm, when hardly any other food can be reached. I shot the subject of the wood-cut there about the middle of last October, when the forest was in all its glory, and nothing but sounds of rivalry and defiance were heard in every quarter. The head is not by any means the largest size, but may be taken as a fair average specimen. The fallow-deer's head was from life, one of the finest I ever saw.

* The three top prongs of the horn, growing out together, form a cup. There is no cup at all except in the finest and oldest stags.

The day I shot the red-deer was perhaps the most unpropitious for stalking which could possibly have been chosen. In the morning, the mist was rolling lazily along the sides of the mountains, in dense masses, and it was evident there would be rain before the close of the day. It was enough to damp the heart of the most ardent deer-stalker, but I determined (having little time to spare) to abide by the forester's opinion. His answer was, that "we would just do our best; but if we were unsuccessful to-day I must e'en wait for to-morrow." With this determination we started for the forest, followed by an under-keeper, with one of Lord Breadalbane's fine deer-hounds, led in a leash. A slight breeze at first sprung up, and partially cleared away the mist from some of the lower hills. The quick eye of Robertson immediately discovered a deer lying down upon the ridge of one of them. His glass was instantly fixed. "There, Sir, if you could manage that fellow, you would have one of the finest harts in the forest." "Well, suppose we go round by the back of the hill, and come down that hollow, we should be within fair distance from the rock." "If he 'll only lie still, and give us time enough." This however the stag had determined not to do, for when we came to the hollow, he had risen from his rocky couch, and was immediately detected by Robertson, quietly taking his breakfast, among his hinds, a considerable way below.

The place was so open all round that it was impossible to get near him, and the mist soon afterwards came on so thick that we only knew that the deer were all round us by their incessant bellowing. The forester looked much disconcerted, for, in addition to the mist, a drizzling rain began to descend. We sat down behind a hillock, and I desired the under-keeper to produce the provision-basket. "If there was only a breeze," says Robertson, "and I do believe it's comin', for the draps o' rain are much heavier." And so it proved, for the mist again partially cleared. We hastened to take advantage of the change, and Robertson, ten yards in advance, mounting every knoll and searching every hollow with an eye that seemed to penetrate the very mist, suddenly threw himself upon the ground, and signalled us to do the same. A roar like that of a bull presently let us know the cause, and on a little amphitheatre about five hundred yards off, his profile in full relief, stood as noble a stag as ever "tossed his beamed frontlet to the sky." There he was, like knight of old, every now and then sounding his trumpet of defiance, and courting the battle and the strife. Nor did he challenge in vain, for while we were admiring his majestic attitude, another champion rushed upon him, and a fierce encounter followed. We could distinctly hear the crashing of their horns, as they alternately drove each other to the extremity of the lists. "I wish the ball was through

the heart o' one o' ye!" muttered the under-keeper. His wishes were soon to be realized, for the younger knight, who seemed to have the advantage in courage and activity, at last fairly drove his adversary over the knoll and disappeared after him. Robertson now rushed forward signing to me to follow, and peeping cautiously over the scene of contest, slunk back again, and crawled on hand and knee up a hollow to a hillock immediately beyond: I following his exemple. When we had gained this point, he took another wary survey, and whispered that the hinds were on the other side of the knoll within thirty yards. It was now a nervous time, but I could not help admiring the coolness of the forester. Without the least appearance of flurry, he had both eyes and ears open, and gave his directions with distinctness and precision. "That will do; there goes a hind, the whole will follow. Place your rifle on that stone, you'll get a famous chance about eighty yards."—"He 'll come at last," he again whispered, as hind after hind slowly passed in review, when a roar was heard immediately below us. "As sure as I 'm leevin' he 's comin' on the very tap o' us. Hold the rifle this way, Sir, and shoot him between the horns the moment his head comes ow'r the knowe." I had scarcely altered my position when head, horns and all appeared in full view. Seeing us in a moment, he was out of sight at a bound, but taking a direction round the

base of the hillock, presented his broadside a beautiful cross-shot. I had plenty of time for deliberate aim, and the Red Knight of the Wilds lay low and bleeding.

It was now nearly four o'clock, and the forester had some doubts whether we could get to Inveroran that night, but as I was anxious to start early in the morning, we despatched the follower for a cart, and with great difficulty dragged the stag by the horns down the hill to the road. Notwithstanding the weather, I had been delighted with my expedition, and only regretted having killed the younger and victorious champion instead of his more bulky rival. During our walk to the inn, I had many anecdotes of former bloody deeds in the forest from Robertson, and not a few where the balls had flown scatheless. One, in particular, amused me. The marquis, accompanied by two friends, one of them, I should imagine, more famous for his scientific than sporting qualifications, were stalking some very fine harts. When within rifle-distance, his lordship and one of his friends were crawling over a knoll, in order to select the best of the lot. "What are they about up there?" said the virtuoso. "*There* are the deer." Bang! bang! Off went the harts in a twinkling, wishing, I have no doubt, that they had always such fair warning when danger was near.

We passed, during the day, several forest-baths, in full use; *i. e.* moss-holes where the stags plunge up to

the neck and roll about to cool themselves, in summer and autumn. When they come out again, black as pitch, they look like the evil genii of the mountain. In former times poachers used to fasten spears with the points upward in these places, and when the stag threw himself into the hole, he was impaled.

Lord Breadalbane has a very fine kennel of dogs, exclusively for bringing the wounded deer to bay. They are for the most part a breed between the foxhound and greyhound, but some are between the deerhound and foxhound. The former are reckoned the best winded. The forester is justly proud of these dogs, mentioning that some of them, when chasing a cold (unwounded) hart with hinds, were so knowing, that, should the hart give them the slip at a burn, and run down it, they would stop their pursuit of the hinds, recover his track, and hold him at bay all night should no one come to their relief. The cunning of the old patriarchs of the forest is also remarkable. Once, when some young dogs were being entered at the two-year-old harts, a stag-royal presented himself, but, seeing he was not the immediate object of pursuit, he witnessed the whole chase from the shelter of a plantation, and, when the foresters returned, they again started him, close to where he was first put up, when he dashed into the thicket of the wood. There was a tame one kept at one of the shooting-lodges which attacked every one but the

foresters, and at last was removed to the park at Taymouth. This fellow became so savage and expert with his antlers, that he killed, I have been told, two horses, and no one dared to pass his haunt unless he knew them.

WILD-GOATS.

I HAVE often thought that for those who have a taste for deer-stalking, without the opportunity, it might be no bad substitute to have a flock or two of goats upon a remote range of hills. The idea suggested itself to me from having heard and seen a good deal of the nature and habits of a few kept wild upon an island on Loch Lomond. These goats, originally a breed between the Welsh and Highland, were very large, and the oldest inhabitant does not recollect when they were first introduced. After having been completely left to themselves for a few generations, they became very cunning and suspicious, always haunting the most out-of-the-way craggy places they could find, and one precipice in particular has been called from time immemorial Crap-na-gour, or Hill of the Goats. The breed has now very much deteriorated, from the fine old wild ones having been killed off, and a number of the tame kind lately substituted. The hair of some of the old "Billys" of the wild breed was eighteen inches long; and I have contrasted a horn of the last fine specimen of the race, shot many years ago, with a good-sized one of the domesticated

species. To stalk these half-tame goats afforded no small diversion, and I have seen several sportsmen engaged nearly a whole day before the fatal shot was fired. But in their wilder state, I am told, they showed amazing game, tact, and cunning in eluding an enemy. The hero, whose horn I have represented, managed to escape several of the most experienced hands in the country, some with ball and others with buck-shot, for a couple of days. He was brought down on the evening of the second day, after being hard struck a short time before; and I have been assured that even larger than he have been killed upon the island, with horns proportionably finer.

Another circumstance also made me imagine that goat-stalking might be practicable. One of my father's tenants, who farmed the remote range of Glen-Douglas, had a flock of goats pastured among the precipices. This flock was always under the command of the shepherds and their dogs. A fine old Billy, however, broke away from the rest, and spurned all control. This lasted upwards of a year, when he became so completely wild that it required half a dozen shepherds, with their guns, to range the mountains for some days before he could be shot.

I am aware that many objections might be raised against my suggestion; first, that the goats would never be wild enough to afford sport, and that, if they were,

they would be apt to take refuge among inaccessible rocks and precipices, where no man could stalk them. I own that it would be many years before goats could become quite wild, but if a fine breed were turned out on some of the steepest and least frequented of our mountains, and especially if they were never disturbed or *brought to bay by dogs*, I have no doubt that their progeny would become fit for stalking. And as to sheltering themselves in rocks and precipices, they would be far less apt to do this when they had acquired confidence in other means of escape. I only, however, mention goat-stalking as an untried amusement, and think it might be worth while for the proprietors of Highland mountains to make the experiment. Sheep-farms, where deer never remain, would answer for the purpose. The goats do not interfere with the sheep, and generally choose the roughest ground where the pasture is of least value. It is unnecessary to say that the old Billys would be uneatable, but the mountain-fed kids are reckoned very delicious.

ROEBUCK CLEANING HIS HORNS.

THE ROE:

HABITS, MANNER OF SHOOTING, ETC.

MANY of the woods that fringe our most romantic lochs and glens abound with the roe; its chief food being the leaves in summer, and the tender tops of the trees in winter. I do not mean to say that it is not also fond of grass or clover, but the other is its most natural choice. So destructive is it to young woods, that many gentlemen give it no quarter on this account. Even trees of considerable growth are not safe from its attacks; the buck sometimes fixing his horns against the stem, walking round and round until the ground is bared, and the bark so injured that the tree dies. The favourite haunts of the roe are those belts of young plantation, surmounted by large pine-forests, common throughout the Highlands; the former supply it with food, and the latter give it shelter.

The pursuit of the roe, if followed in a proper way, affords first-rate sport, and taxes to the full the strength, skill, and energy of the hunter; but this is seldom the case, and the generality of roe-hunts are nothing but

blunders from beginning to end. The common way of proceeding is, to place half-a-dozen gentlemen with their guns in the passes, and then, with a host of beaters and dogs, to scour the plantations, always commencing at the windward side, where the roes are sure to be found. I confess I have no great liking to this plan; the plantations are thoroughly disturbed, almost every head of game being driven out; and I never saw a party of this kind succeed much better than when one or two experienced roe-hunters had the whole sport to themselves.*

A description of one of these noisy parties will, with a few exceptions, apply to all. We will suppose the sportsmen snugly in their passes, while the beaters and dogs are in full hoot and howl in the wood below; one man allows the roe to slip by unobserved, until it is almost out of reach, then fires his buck-shot, perhaps wounding

* The roe is occasionally stalked, and shot with the rifle, and I have heard it alleged, that it is thus raised to the dignity of a deer, whereas the common method of buck-shot degrades it to the level of a hare. Having several times tried this experiment, I may safely pronounce it a most wretched burlesque upon deer-stalking. Roes almost always confine themselves to the woods, and although, by peeping round corners and openings in the plantations, you may sometimes get a good rifle-shot, yet you are much more apt to come upon them quite within range of buck-shot, especially if the cover is not very thin, which a good haunt of roes seldom is. They are thus almost sure to see and hear you and steal away unperceived; but should you succeed in getting the shot, it is pretty certain to be a running one, and you will stand but a poor chance with a rifle at a roe bounding among thick plantation. The great excitement of deer-stalking consists in seeing your game from a distance without being yourself perceived, which affords ample scope for skill and tact in approaching it.

his game, which the dogs are unable to run down; another never sees it at all; a third shows himself in the pass, and so throws away his chance; and I have even known two instances of our brethren from the south leaving their posts for a time to take a comfortable luncheon—their love of a roe-pasty prevailing over their love of the chase. One of them was only detected by the hounds and roe having run right through his pass during his absence. Although a man should not be so churlish as to refuse joining a party of this kind, yet I could excuse any knowing roe-hunter for anticipating with greater pleasure and hope of success the day when he should take the field alone.

Such a one will always prefer a day with scarcely a breath of air, high wind being destruction to his sport: first, from the difficulty of hearing the hound; and, next, from the currents of air which he will be obliged to avoid, lest the roe should wind him. His only companion is a very slow and steady hound. Thoroughly acquainted with all the passes, he places himself in that he considers the best, ready to change his position should the baying of the hound seem to indicate that the roe has taken a different direction. If it escapes at the first burst, he is not at all disconcerted, as his tactics now begin. The roe perhaps stretches away into the large pine-forest, and he sees his good hound slowly and surely threading his way through the thick underwood, making the welkin

ring. Now is the time for our sportsman to display the strength of his lungs and limbs. Aware that the roe, after a fair heat, will probably slacken his speed, and with the hound scarcely more than a hundred yards behind, course slowly round and round a knot of hillocks, perhaps for half an hour at a time, he will use his utmost efforts to keep within hearing of the bay. Whenever this appears nearly confined to one place, he advances with extreme caution, peering round at every step, with his gun cocked and held ready to fire. The sound seems now at hand—again more distant, as it is obstructed by the intervening hillocks; he conceals himself upon an angle of one of them, near the centre of the knot, to command as good a view both ways as he can. If the hound continues opening near, he watches with the utmost vigilance, almost holding his breath to catch the slightest sound. After waiting some time, should the dog still remain near, he will occasionally shift his position, but always with the same caution.

A novice would scarcely believe the noiseless step with which a roe will often pass, and the scanty covering of brushwood that will screen it from observation. Should it slip by in this manner, you will of course immediately know by the tracking of the hound, which has often made me aware of its almost magical transit. Attention and experience, however, will considerably lessen the roe's chance of escape. Whenever it takes another direction, follow

at your best speed, until it again tries the dodging game. Continue the pursuit so long as your hound is stanch, and your own strength holds out, taking advantage of every pass within and round the wood.

Here let me give two cautions: always to dress as near the colour of the ground and trees as you can, and when concealed, never to make the least motion; if you do, the roe will at once perceive it and stop short. You will most likely only be made aware of its having done so by the hound coming within forty or fifty yards, and then turning away in another direction. When properly dressed, even should your place of concealment not be very good, the roe will be pretty sure to pass *if you keep perfectly still.* This is even more necessary when expecting a hill-fox. Should the roe take a straight course, right out of your beat, you must await its return, which, if it has not been alarmed or shot at, you may pretty confidently expect.

In recommending the above manner of roe-shooting, it must be remembered that I do not say it is easy; but I do say that, when thoroughly understood, it will be attended with much greater success in the long run, and the roes will be less disturbed, than when many of the passes are kept by novices in the sport. I once, in Kenmure wood, at the head of Loch Lomond, by this mode killed two in a few hours, one of them a very fine old buck, without harassing any others; while a party of five

or six of us, and beaters to correspond, after alarming the whole wood, and firing many shots, only got three yearling fawns in four whole days.

Many gentlemen have a great prejudice against allowing hounds to enter their covers, for fear of driving the roes away, when the blame should rather be laid on their large party, unskilful manœuvring, and long random shots. I have had good proof that roes are not so much afraid of fox-hounds as people suppose. A gentleman of my acquaintance had a newly-planted wood much injured by them: he desired the gamekeeper to hunt them out; so little, however, did this frighten them, that they have been known to return within an hour after the hounds were taken off, nor would they leave the place until one or two had been shot.

Nor is this the only instance which has come within my own notice. On the shooting-ground which I took for a season at Kinnaird, in Perthshire, was a pine wood, with an oak copse at the side; here I frequently saw a fine buck and two does feeding. They were very tame, and I tried in vain to beat them out with the shepherd's dogs. I had not then much knowledge of roe-hunting; but I procured an old hound, and pursued them every day for a week without getting a shot. They were still to be found in their old haunts every morning, although ever so hard hunted the day before. They would take a stretch upon the open moor for an hour, and then return,

always keeping together; and it was only by marking a much-used pass that I at length succeeded in getting a very fair right and left, killing the buck with one barrel, and one of the does with the other. A stray shot struck the other doe, which happened to be in line, and broke her leg, although I was not aware of it. Two days after, a farmer sent me word that a wounded roe had been seen in the wood. I again put the hound into the cover, and in a short time the poor creature came limping past, when I shot it, to prevent the dog from putting it to a more cruel death. I do not mention this as claiming any merit, for the shots were open, near, and easy; greater skill might have secured them some time before: but I think a fair inference in proof of my assertion may be drawn from this and other instances of the kind.

The roe's sagacity in discovering real from apparent danger is remarkable: the crouching shooter with his deadly gun is instantly detected, while the harmless workman may even blast the rock and cause no alarm. This fact I have been assured of by men employed on the Highland road, who had often seen the roes peeping at them from the cliffs above, watching their whole proceedings without any signs of fear.

The roe has no great kindliness to the fallow deer. It is a curious fact, that on Loch Lomond there are two large wooded islands which the roes constantly haunt, without ever crossing to a third, where deer are kept,

though well adapted to their habits. When swimming in and out of these islands, the roes have regular passes as on land, but if a boat be near they will never attempt to cross. A few years ago, an English gentleman wishing for a couple, a plan of catching them in the water was thought of; for this purpose, boats were concealed near the passes, and the roes hunted out of the islands: but they were such dexterous swimmers, and doubled so well, that they always escaped, until the thought of fixing a noose to a pole suggested itself, by which simple device they were soon secured. In a short time they became quite domesticated, and would eat from the hand of their keeper.

Another was caught many years ago, which my brothers and I, when boys, begged to be allowed to tame. We used to bring it leaves in great quantities, which it would eat from our hands, always preferring those of the mountain-ash. The confinement, however, did not agree with it; and, although supplied with grass, clover, and everything we could think of, it fell off in condition, and we were obliged to set it free.

The roe has two young ones at a time, the most beautiful little creatures possible. It is curious to see them, when started, bound away with the greatest activity, though no bigger than a cat.

CUR FOX.

MOUNTAIN FOX.

THE MOUNTAIN-FOX.

Occasionally, while ranging for roes, the hounds come on the track of a hill-fox; they will then show even more than their usual keenness, and open with greater ardour. As the same passes often serve for both, the roe-hunter has sometimes an opportunity of shooting this wily destroyer. Such a chance only occurs when prey is scarce on the mountains, and he leaves them to seek it in the woods below; I therefore do not recommend having a charge of smaller shot in one barrel—a plan adopted by some.

Any one who sees the hill-fox bounding along within fair distance, will immediately be struck with the difference of his appearance from that of the small cur, which never leaves the low grounds. The mountain-fox is a splendid-looking fellow; even the sneaking gait of the enemy of the poultry-yard has, in a great measure, left him; he seems to feel that he breathes a freer air, and lives by more noble plunder. He is extremely destructive to all game within his range, and the havoc he makes among the hill-lambs is a serious loss to the

farmer. . He will also not unfrequently attack and destroy full-grown sheep. To prevent the increase of these freebooters, a man is appointed for each district of the Highlands, called "the fox-hunter," whose business it is to search out and destroy the young litters, in which he is ably seconded by the farmers and shepherds.

The place selected by the mountain-fox for rearing its young is widely different from that of his pigmy relation of the Lowlands. Unlike the latter, who chooses an old badger-earth or drain, in the midst, perhaps, of a pheasant preserve, the hill-fox prefers some wild and craggy ravine, on the top or side of a mountain, far removed from the haunts of men. In spring, these places are all narrowly searched by the shepherds, and the den (for you cannot call the clefts of the rock an earth) often detected by the quantities of wool, feathers of grouse, &c., scattered about the entrance. These are the remains of prey brought to the young; for as soon as they are able to eat flesh, the old ones leave them during the day, bringing them food morning and evening.

When the litter is discovered, "the fox-hunter" is brought into requisition (who often at this time has more calls than he can answer); his terriers are sent into the den, and the young massacred; a watch is then set to command a view all round, in order, if possible, to shoot the old ones when they return. I have been told

by people thus employed, that they had no idea of the proverbial cunning of the fox until they saw it shown upon such occasions. Although the place has been perfectly bare, the old ones have come unperceived within ten yards of the party, and were at last only discovered by the straining of the dogs on the leash. I have often heard the watchers say, that the ease with which "the tod" avoids their faces, and skulks behind their backs, is most surprising. If the foxes escape the guns, as they commonly do, "the streakers"* are slipped upon them, and, if not then run down, nothing remains to be done but again to set the watch. So long as the old ones are prevented from entering, they will return morning and evening for several days; but, should either of them get access, and miss the young, they come back no more. At those times of the year when there are no litters, the usual way of hunting is to place a man, with a streaker or greyhound ready to slip, upon the tops of the neighbouring hills; the fox-hunter then draws all the corries, crags, &c., where they haunt. Should Reynard be started, he is almost sure to take a course over the top of one of the hills where the men are posted. He comes up all blown, and, if observed, (which, I must say, is seldom the case,) has a fresh streaker slipped upon him, which ought to run him down.

* A breed between the largest size of greyhound and foxhound. Some of them are swift, very savage, and admirably adapted for the purpose.

I may here give an account of a hunt I had with one of my brothers, after as fine a mountain-fox as ever prowled upon the wild moor. We had gone on a roe-hunting expedition to a high and steep hill in Dumbartonshire, the lower part of which was a larch and oak copse, the centre a large pine-wood, and the top covered with long heather. After choosing our passes between the pine-wood and copse, we sent a first-rate old hound to draw the latter; scarcely had it been in the cover ten minutes, when it opened upon a cold scent, and continued puzzling for a considerable time. As this was not its wont when upon a roe, we half suspected a fox: presently the scent warmed, and in a short time the hound opened gaily. Our hopes were high, as it came straight in the direction of our passes. In a moment I heard my brother fire; and the baying of the hound ceasing shortly after, I concluded the shot had taken effect, and walked off to see what he had killed. When I had gone a little distance, I met him running and calling to me to get into my pass again, as he had shot at an enormous fox in the thickest part of the cover; and as it had doubled back, which had occasioned the check, it would most likely try my pass next. I wheeled about at full speed, and arrived just too late for a deadly shot. When within seventy yards of the pass, the fox was bounding over the stone wall that divides the copse from the pine-wood, and presenting his broadside, a very distant but clear

and open shot. I discharged both barrels, and watched narrowly to see if he was hit; the ground was level for a short way, and no abatement of his speed was perceptible; but as soon as he began to climb the hill, a labouring motion at once told that one of us had wounded him. Without stopping to load, I ran to see if there was blood upon the grass, and when thus engaged, the hound, which had recovered the track, came up full cry. I had no choice left but to breast the hill, and, if possible, keep within hearing of the dog. Panting and breathless, I could hear the bay more and more distant, and was just beginning to fear that the fox's object was the savage ravines of Glen-Douglas, when it ceased on a sudden. Encouraged by the hope that he might be run down, I redoubled my exertions, and after scrambling a mile and a half from where I fired, saw the hound at check, at the top of the pine-wood where it joins the heather. I made several unsuccessful casts above; and then, thinking that, unable to climb the hill, he had returned to the shelter of the wood, I was making a circle below, when he sprung out of the heather, not thirty yards off, and ran straight down the hill, his lagging and staggering gait showing that he had got his death-wound. I would now have given a good deal had my gun been loaded; but not a moment was to be lost, as the hound viewed the fox, and was again full cry. I dashed over stock and stone, but it was not long before there was another pause

in mid career. When I came up, the ground was perfectly bare, not a furze-bush to cover a rat, and the hound completely at fault. I had just taken out my powder-flask to load, when, from no other concealment than the bare stem of a fallen fir-tree, the fox a second time burst out, as fair a shot as I could wish. The hound was close to his brush, so back went my powder-flask into my pocket, and I rushed down the steep with reckless desperation. The bay became fainter and fainter; my head grew dizzy; I had run a distance of three miles on one of the steepest hills in Scotland, and had just given up hope of another check, when I heard a woodman's axe. More by signs than words, I made him comprehend that he must follow the dog as long as he was able; sat down to rest for a moment, and then loaded my gun. No sound was now to be heard; the whole wood seemed as if it had never been disturbed. I shouldered my gun, and was proceeding, as I thought, in the direction of the chase, when I met my brother, who had from the first taken a different route, in order to intercept the fox at another point. We proceeded together in search of hound and woodman, but for a long time unsuccessfully; at last we thought of returning to the place were I first found him at work. Our delight may be imagined, when we saw the hound tied up, the woodman smoking his pipe, and the fox lifeless on the ground, a perfect monster. The man's account was, that after

following a considerable way, and being nearly distanced, there was a sudden check; when he came up, he found the fox dead, the hound standing over him, without having touched a hair—he had run till his heart was broken. We sent this magnificent fox to be stuffed at the College Museum, Glasgow; those who had charge of it told us they had never seen one nearly so large, and many who came on purpose to see it were equally astonished at its size. It is now in my possession; and the woodcut shows most correctly the difference between it and a very fine specimen of the poultry-fox, shot in my brother's preserves. The brush of the larger fox is not longer than that of the smaller, and less white on the tip, but it is uncommonly thick and bushy. He stands very high upon his legs, which are exceedingly muscular; his head is very broad, and his nose not nearly so peaked as the other's; his coat is also much more shaggy, and mixed with white hairs—an invariable mark of the hill-fox, and which makes his colour lighter and a less decided red than the fox of the Lowlands.

THE WILD-CAT.

THE wild-cat is now rare in this country. Although I have spent a great part of my life in the most mountainous districts of Scotland, where killing vermin formed the gamekeeper's principal business, and often my own recreation, I have never seen more than five or six genuine wild-cats. Many, on reading this, will perhaps wonder at my statement, and even give it a flat contradiction, by alleging the numbers that have come under their own notice. Nay, I was even gravely told by a gentleman from the south of England, a keen observer and fond of natural history, that there were wild-cats there,* and the skin of a cat killed in one of the southern counties was sent to me as a proof; this, I need hardly say, was the large and sleek coat of an overgrown Tom, whose ancestors, no doubt, had purred upon the hearth-rug.

I am far from meaning that there are no cats running

* I have been frequently assured that wild-cats have been killed on the Cumberland and Westmoreland hills; but, never having seen any specimens, I cannot speak from my own knowledge. There is no doubt that martins exist in some of the most hilly and wooded districts of England.

It should be observed that the Wild-cat is crouching a little, which takes off from its height, while full effect is given to that of the Tame.

wild in England; of course, wherever there are tame cats, some of them, especially the very old ones, will forsake their homes, and live by plunder in the woods. These may also breed; but their progeny, though undomesticated, will always be widely different in habits, in appearance, in strength, and in ferocity, from the true cat of the mountains. I have seen no less than thirty of these *naturalized* wild-cats* trapped in a year in a single preserve in the Highlands; some of *them* might have been mistaken for the genuine breed. The colour in both was pretty much alike, but there were other points which clearly showed their domestic origin. They were, in fact, a cross between the wild and tame cat. I have seen many of this kind stuffed in museums and collections, as fine specimens of the wild-cat, and believed to be so even by those who might have known better.

The unerring marks of the thorough-bred species are, first, the great size,—next, the colour, which does not vary as in the domestic animal, but is always a dusky gray,

* The mischief done to game even by the house-cat, especially if half-starved in the cottages of the poor, may be shown from the admission of a witness whose evidence will not be doubted. A friend of mine had shot a large cat in a covert adjoining the cottage of an old woman, and, being rather pleased at ridding the preserve of such an enemy, was carrying it too ostentatiously past her door. She rushed out in a fury, demanding "how he *dar'd* to kill the best cat in a' the country?" He replied, that "wandering cats were never of much use for mice." "*Mice!* Wha 's speakin o' mice, or rats aither? There was scarcely a day she did na bring in a young hare or a rabbit or a patrick. *Use!* It wad be somethin' to be prood o', if they ill-faured brutes o' dogs o' yours were half as usefu'!!"

brindled on the belly and flanks with dingy brown—hair long and rough,—the head exceedingly broad,—ears short,—tusks extremely large. Another very distinguishing point is the great length and power of the limbs. It stands as high as a good-sized dog. But perhaps the most unfailing mark of all is the tail, which is so long and bushy as to strike the most careless observer. In the males it is generally much shorter than in the females, but even more remarkable, being almost as thick as a fox's brush.

The woodcut is taken from the largest female that has ever been killed in Dumbartonshire, and most correctly shows the difference of its size from that of a full-grown house-cat. It was trapped on the banks of Loch Lomond in the depth of winter, having come down to the low ground in quest of prey. The bait was half a hare, hung on a tree, the trap being set immediately under. The person who went to inspect it thought, when at a little distance, that a yearling lamb was caught. As he came near, the cat sprang up two or three feet from the ground, carrying the large heavy trap as if scarcely feeling its weight. He would have had great difficulty in killing it, had he not dodged round the tree when aiming a blow. I have seen two males bearing the same proportion to this specimen, both in size and fierceness of aspect, as an old half-wild Tom to a chimney-nook mother Tabby. One of these was shot by a gamekeeper, when on a

grouse-shooting expedition, in a very remote range; the other was trapped near the top of a high mountain.

Except in the depth of a very severe winter, the wild-cat seldom leaves its lone retreat. Nothing comes amiss to it in the shape of prey; lambs, grouse, hares, are all seized with equal avidity. The female fears nothing when in defence of her young, and will attack even man himself. She generally rears them in rocky clefts and precipices. I saw a couple of young ones that were killed in one of the mountain cairns; they were nearly as large as a house-cat, although not many weeks old. It was curious to see their short tails, and helpless, unformed kitten look, contrasted with their size. Several attempts were made to shoot the old one, but she was never seen; probably, upon missing her young, she forsook the haunt.

The wild-cat has seldom more than three or four young ones at a time—often only two.

THE MARTIN.

This beautiful connecting link between the fowmarte * and the cat is not a native of this country. It was imported, I believe, from America, and is pretty generally dispersed over the wild and wooded districts of Scotland. It has none of the offensive odour of the fowmarte, and even more alertness and activity than the cat. Running at a little distance, it looks exactly like a giant weasel. In some the breast is nearly white, whilst in others it is a bright orange, which has given occasion to the supposition, that they are varieties of the species; but I have no doubt they are the same. Of the many I have seen trapped or shot, I always remarked that the male was darker in the colour, and his breast almost white; that of the female was orange, and the fur lighter brown. I had a male and female stuffed that were trapped together at the same bait, exactly answering to this description.

When pursued, the martin, although its legs are so short, can run faster than a cat; this it does by a succession of springs, for which its long body gives it a

* The name Fowmarte is a Scottish corruption from the Teutonic Ful, *fetid*, and Merder, *a martin*.

great advantage. As a last resource, it will climb trees, and spring from one to another, like a squirrel. I once, with two or three companions, had a curious hunt of this kind. The martin had been driven by a very swift terrier into a clump of pines, which it so nearly resembled in colour, that we had great difficulty to keep sight of it. At last we thought of cutting off its retreat by climbing all the adjacent trees: the creature showed great coolness when thus driven to extremities, awaiting the approach of its enemy, perched on the pinnacle of the tallest pine; and it was only when one of our party got quite close, that it sprang from the top to the bottom of the tree, rebounding nearly a yard from the hard turf, just where I was standing, and, not a whit disconcerted, darted off at full speed, gained a precipice, and made good its escape.

Unless hard pressed, however, the martin is more apt to go to earth, or take shelter in the clefts of the rocks, than upon trees. When run to ground by a fox-hound, there is no creature more easily smoked out: it will bolt almost immediately, and numbers are killed in this manner, although, from the quickness and uncertainty of its exit, it is anything but an easy shot.

When in quest of prey, it is daring as well as mischievous; not so apt to leave its secure haunts in the day-time, but under cover of darkness will travel many miles, committing great devastation in preserves; and

unless trapped or shot, will return night after night to the poultry-yard, killing many more fowls than it devours. One of these marauders had nearly made a clear sweep of my father's poultry: it kept peering over the perch with the greatest impudence, and could scarcely be driven thence by the dairymaid: no sooner was she out of sight than it would return. One of the farm-servants at last procured a trap, and having set it without art or covering, the loud screams of the robber presently made known his capture.

The martin generally selects a magpie's nest in the thickest pine-tree, and there rears its young; hence it has obtained the name of pine-weasel. One, however, was brought me that had its litter in the thatch of an old barn; it was detected by a dog, driven out, and shot; the young were rather smaller than kittens, and quite as sweet and clean.

If seized by the breast, the martin, like the cat, is easily killed by a good dog; but the skull is so hard, that I have seen one, when released from a trap with all its legs broken, roll away upon the ground, after receiving half-a-dozen hard blows on the head from the keeper's cudgel. This animal being easily trapped or run down, is not nearly so numerous now as it was some years ago.

LOCH-FISHING.

THE true angler is almost always a lover of nature; if not, he loses half the pleasure of his art. In following the river's course, he must of necessity pass through the finest and most varied scenery; and that, too, at a time when beauty crowns the year. But, enchanting as are the woodland banks of the quiet stream, there is to me a higher and yet more powerful charm in the solitary wildness or savage grandeur of the Highland loch. The very *stillness* of those bare hills and craggy summits, broken only by the rushing of some rapid burn that intersects them, has a tendency to elevate, while it calms the mind; and I envy not the man who could frequent such scenes and not feel them.

But if the proficient in the gentle craft has an eye equally keen to the beauties so lavishly scattered around him, it happens no less often that the admirer of nature's wildest charms fancies himself an angler. Our man of taste has, perhaps, fished a few rivers near him, in the spring, when trout are lean and hungry; and, having chosen a propitious day, has sometimes returned with a tolerable creelful. He then starts on his pleasure-

tour, and of course his fishing-rod forms an important accompaniment. At first he makes some determined attacks upon the finny tribe; but, being generally unsuccessful, his rod is laid aside, and, after having been delighted with the sublimities and beauties of half the Highlands, he returns home with but an indifferent account of his piscatorial achievements. To such an one I particularly address the few simple directions in loch-fishing, which time and patience have enabled me to collect.

There are particular times in every season when trout more readily take in many of the Highland lochs, and these it should be the angler's first study to discover. For instance, the best time for trolling with the minnow, in Loch Vennachar, is from the end of February to the middle of May, when large fish may be taken. They never rise well at the fly in this loch. In Loch Lomond, the trolling does not begin till May, and only lasts till the middle of June, when the fly-fishing commences. More may then be caught, but, with the exception of sea-trout, seldom nearly so large as with the minnow. In Loch Katrine, you may troll with success all the season. The fishing in Lochs Earn, Lubnaig, and Voil is not good till May: the trout in those lochs being small, they are never trolled except for the gillaroo, which inhabits them all, and sometimes grows to a great size. The trouting in Loch Ard is best at an early part of the

year, falling off very much as the season advances; while Lochs Chon and Dhu, not so good as Loch Ard at the beginning of it, are much better afterwards. In short, a number of the lochs in the Highlands may, at certain times, be either fly-fished or trolled with greater success. There are also some which may be fished either way throughout the season; the angler's judgment determining which, as wind, water, and sky suggest. These, if inhabited by pike, are my particular favourites, especially when the greater part of the shore is so clear of weeds as to make one independent of a boat.

Many people think a loch injured by pike: on the contrary, unless very numerous, as in Loch Menteith, I have seldom seen one much worth fishing without them; always excepting those where the Loch Awe trout or gillaroo are to be found. If a man prefers killing eight or nine dozen, with scarcely a half-pounder among them, to a dozen fine trout from half-a-pound to three pounds weight, then he may count the pike his enemy; but the latter feat will both better prove his skill and afford him much greater sport. He who wishes to excel in angling, will leave the loch with its tiny multitude to the bungler, and select the other, where all his science will be called into play.

The reason why yellow trout are always large where there are pike, is obvious: the small fry are all devoured

by the latter, and the others, having more food, increase in size. A few years ago Loch Katrine was choke-full of very small trout, which have gradually become larger since pike have been introduced; and now two or three dozen fine red trout may be taken in a day.

There are two other small lochs near Loch Katrine which breed very large pike, and are full of prime trout, Loch Arklet and Loch Dronkie; but less fortunate than their neighbours in not having been immortalized by our Great Minstrel: the latter especially, from its ill-sounding name, we cannot wonder that a poet discards, but an angler will find its attractions. The shores of these lochs being almost clear of weeds, and the ground firm, the best parts may be reached by wading, and fish taken from half-a-pound to three pounds weight. Upon one occasion, when playing a good-sized trout in Loch Dronkie, an enormous pike made several dashes, and at last succeeded in seizing it. I used every effort to frighten him away; but so determined was he, that, though I could see him quite plainly in shallow water, with my trout held across his tremendous jaws, he would not be beat off; and at last when, kicking the water, I strained my line, he gave a plunge, broke my rod, and escaped with his prey.

FLY-FISHING.

The flies I have generally found best for loch-fishing are a light speckled, or brown mottled mallard wing,

according to the day; reddish-brown mohair body, red hackle, and No. 7 hook, tied with yellow silk, for a trail; and a teal-wing, claret-colour mohair body, black hackle, and No. 6 hook, tied with orange or yellow silk, for a bob. If the loch is full and muddy, add a small thread of silver tinsel to the latter, and increase the size of both; in large lochs, a green body is also very killing. In fishing a loch where the trout are small, diminish the size of your hook; even in river fishing, I seldom use any but those I have named, only much smaller and without the mohair; adding a hare's-ear body and woodcock wing early in the season, and a mouse body and snipe wing at a later period.

Should the loch you are fishing contain sea-trout or salmon, ascertain from any good fisher in the neighbourhood what are the most killing flies, and tie them for yourself. Should you not be "up to this," *beg, borrow, or buy them from him.* In fishing with a long line, from a boat, let the trail be either a sea-trout or salmon-fly; but if throwing from shore, never use the latter except by itself. When a salmon rises, whether in a loch or a river, you may allow him a second or two longer than a trout. He may be *safely* permitted to turn before you strike. A two-handed rod, large reel with plenty of line, and the lightest tackle are necessary.

If the wind is so high as to cause decided waves upon one of these small lochs, you will succeed much better

with the minnow-tackle than the fly: indeed, the best plan then is to troll for pike, with a par; they always take best in high wind, but are so capricious that you may have three runs in half-an-hour, and, perhaps, not one in several apparently favourable days. High wind is prejudicial to fly-fishing in lochs where the trout are large, because it scatters them into unlikely places; and being, of course, much fewer in number than when small, you are not so apt to stumble upon them; the waves also prevent their seeing the fly so readily.

When there is a fine even breeze, immediately repair to the loch. Begin to fish those parts where the wind blows fairest from the shore; if you know the loch well, you have a great advantage. The trout have many feeding places, and shift from one to another with the slightest change of the wind. Near some one of these they generally keep watching the breeze, which blows them flies and insects. They are usually in companies; so when the angler hooks one, he should endeavour to get it away from the rest; he will then most likely rise another the next throw or two. He must keep a very sharp look-out for these places, and may generally detect them by the rising of the trout. They sometimes, but not so often, feed singly.

When a fish takes the fly, raise your arm with a sort of *indescribable* turn of the wrist: if this is done with a *jerk*, the fly is whipped away from the trout; but if

omitted altogether, it will often make its escape, after feeling the hook. It is for want of knack in this particular that so many trout are lost after having risen to the fly. When you hook a good fish that never shows above water, but swims low with a dead heavy pull, be very cautious; it is most likely tenderly hooked, and, with the least strain upon the line, will break away.

The shore in many parts of the lochs is fringed with weeds, beyond which you may cast by wading. Should you hook a trout in such a situation, and not find an opening to lead it through, use every endeavour to keep it from the weeds: and when quite tired out, raise its head above water, and tow it rapidly over them. If you can reach beyond the weeds with your landing-net, the difficulty in a great measure ceases.

When salmon or trout spring out of the water, you may be sure that neither will *be so apt to rise to your fly*, whether in lochs or rivers.

THE MINNOW-TACKLE.

In fishing for trout with the minnow, I also prefer a moderate breeze, unless in bright sunshine, when more wind is necessary. Your tackle should be the very best single gut, dyed with strong tea, or anything to take the shine off; a No. 13 hook and two No. 8's tied back to back: two swivels are enough, and no

lead on the line. Any one with the least knowledge of angling knows how to bait. The large hook enters the minnow's mouth and is brought out near the tail, which is curved in order to make it spin; one of the others is passed through its lips. A fly-top makes the minnow spin more lively, and is therefore preferable to a bait one: the rod-makers will say the reverse. In river-fishing, another branch and couple of small hooks fastened to the gut, and fixed in the minnow's side, are often used; but I do not recommend them for the lochs.

The best, although most tedious way of casting, is to gather the line with your right hand, and, letting the minnow hang down about a yard, throw it out, shifting the rod at the same time from the left hand to the right; you can thus make further casts, and the minnow lasts twice as long. If the wind is high, try all the sheltered bays; you may then often hook a fish where you would otherwise have had little chance. Sink the minnow a few inches below the surface, and when you see or feel a bite, slacken your line a little; when you strike, it must be done with much more force than in fly-fishing.

When trolling from a boat, the less the breeze the longer the line; sink it with lead to a considerable depth. In baiting, use a No. 9 hook through the minnow's lips, and a 13 or 14 through the tail

(*vide* cut). You thus bait much more quickly, and

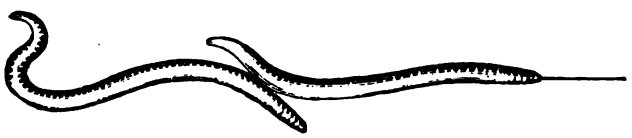
the minnow's appearance is not so apt to be injured; its tail can also be curved up, more or less, to make it spin true. Thus baited, you may troll with it from a boat for half a day; but if you attempt to cast, it will very soon be thrown off. Always take with you two coarse trolling-rods, that you do not mind sinking in the water, and very large reels with plenty of line, or oiled cord, if you wish.

Your boatman should be well acquainted with the ground; but if not, endeavour to troll between the shallow and the deep, where the trout are on the outlook. Find out if there are any sunk rocks or banks, and troll round them also. Always sweep past the mouths of any rivers or brooks; they are very likely places, either with minnow or fly.

Troll as much as possible with the wind, although in fly-fishing it is best to row against it. Take care, when you hook a fish, that your boatman does not strain your line in the former case, nor slacken it in the latter; either of which he is apt to do, by lying upon his oars, watching your proceedings. You must, in fact, direct his slightest movement. When the waters are large and deep, such as Loch Lomond and Loch Awe, the heaviest

fish are always taken by trolling with small trout, minnow, or par.

If the loch is frequented by salmon, have one of your rods baited with a par; and, if passing any of his haunts near the shore, take your fly-rod, land, and throw from it, but do not go near the place with the boat. Should no fish rise after you have thrown some time, take off your fly, put on a large bait-hook and two floats, one about six yards from the other; the line is thus prevented from dangling near the hook, which must hang down about four yards from the last float, baited with two large dew-worms in the following manner:—Enter the hook at the tail of one, and bring it out about one-fourth of an inch below the head; pull up the worm upon the gut; then put in the hook about one-fourth of an inch below the head of the other, leaving the same length of worm at the point; this moves about, and entices the salmon; pull down the first worm to the other, and your hook is baited (*vide* cut). When the



float disappears, be in no hurry to strike till the fish has *tightened* the line; you are thus pretty sure of its head being turned away, and consequently have a better chance of hooking. This should only be attempted

where the shores are deep and rocky, on a cloudy day, with a stiff breeze from the south or west, and skiffs of rain. Do not give up hope too soon, for the salmon are generally swimming in small shoals backwards and forwards along the shore; a little time may thus elapse before they pass where you are fishing.

In trolling with par for Loch Awe trout, salmon, or the gillaroo, use double or even triple gut, well dyed; a couple of swivels are quite enough, and a very heavy lead. Bait in the same way as when trolling with minnow from a boat, only the hooks must be considerably larger to suit the par.* Should the weather become calm, you may often hook a large cunning fish by waiting till dusk of evening, letting out a very long line, and sinking your rod in the water, with the butt against your shoulder. The biggest fish are always on the search for food at this time; and, perhaps, the most killing bait is a loach—also excellent for large perch, some of which I have caught, when trolling, upwards of three pounds weight.

* If the bait is large, such as a trout, three pairs of hooks tied back to back with a single one at the top may be used. The single hook passes through the bait's lips, the two middle pairs are fixed in its back, and one of the lower hooks curves up the tail to make it spin true, as in the cut. This is exactly the same as the common method of spinning with bleak or gudgeon for Thames trout, only the hooks in the latter case are much smaller (No. 5), and the two bottom rows have three instead of two hooks tied back to back. In both cases very rapid spinning is necessary, and consequently more swivels.

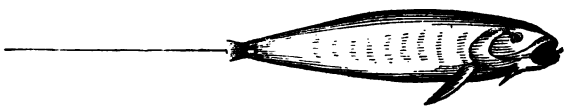
TROLLING FOR PIKE.

The common way of rod-fishing for pike in the Highlands is with a running-bait,—a par, or small trout, and plenty of hooks, tied back to back on gimp, stuck all round it; also a couple of large swivels, and the line a little loaded with lead. They always take best mornings and evenings, except on very windy days; so, if the angler is inclined to try a cast for a pike, after having filled his creel with trout, he may begin about six o'clock.

THE GORGE-TROLL.

Trolling with the gorge is often very deadly in weedy lochs, especially small openings that cannot be fished with the running-bait. I have seldom, however, seen it used in Scotland, except in a very clumsy way—a large double hook, armed upon wire, with the bait inverted, and no attempt to make it spin; unless pike are in a very hungry mood, this is not very enticing. The proper gorge-hook is a small double one, commonly used for eels, with very sharp barbs, slightly turned inwards; the shank loaded with lead, in order to make the bait sink quickly, and enable you to make far casts with precision. This hook is fastened by a small brass ring to about a foot of gimp: (you require

a baiting-needle:) after cutting off the tail and all the fins but one of the top side ones, hook on the loop of the gimp to the needle, and insert it at the mouth of the bait, bringing it out at the middle of the fork of the tail: the lead and shank of the hook will thus be hid in the mouth and belly of the bait, and only the barbs and points visible. Tie the tail to the gimp with thread. (*Vide* cut.) After casting, let the bait sink to



the bottom, then draw it to the top, and the single fin will make it spin beautifully. When a pike seizes, you must not be in a hurry to strike, or you have small chance of hooking: let out your line with your hand; give him sufficient time to gorge the bait, and then he is fast and firm as you could wish. Use a coarse trolling-rod, with large strong rings, and reel of oiled cord: no swivel is required. Some use a large gaudy fly for pike; I never do so, and do not recommend it, though I have sometimes caught small pike even with a common trout fly.

It is much more easy to find out the haunts of pike than those of trout. The best places are in and near the weedy bays. Fish all these with the running-bait, and, if possible, by wading, cast immediately beyond

the weeds, between the shallow and the deep water; this, however, the sinking mud will often prevent your accomplishing. If you have found the pike on the feed, you may return over the same ground with the gorge, trying all the openings among the weeds that you could not fish with the running-bait. I never troll for pike from a boat unless they cannot be reached any other way.

SET-LINES FOR PIKE.

Although rod-fishing for pike affords undoubtedly the best sport, and requires much greater skill, yet by far the most deadly way is with set-lines. This is either done with a long line, and from twelve to twenty hooks, or with single hooks, fixed to a bottle or other equally buoyant float. I have also heard of tying baited hooks to the legs of geese, and turning them adrift: when a pike seizes the bait, the goose begins to flap its wings, and there is often considerable sport in the struggle; but it is certainly a most cruel diversion, especially if a large pike is hooked. The humane man will be more amused with the float, which I have often practised with great success.

After very tightly corking up the bottles, and fastening the cord to them, let from five to eight feet hang down, according to the depth of the water; fix a large double pike-hook, armed upon brass wire, and

baited with a small perch, trout, roach, or frog to each: be sure to cut off the perch's dorsal fin and lower part of the gills. The baits are inverted, the barbs of the hook projecting from their mouths. The best time for this amusement is on one of those delicious evenings with scarcely a breath of air, when the shadow of the mountain becomes more imposing on the unrippled loch, and twilight begins to steal over the scene. Let the hum of the beetle be your warning bell.

Having arranged all your tackle, and baited your hooks, place them *regularly* in a light two-oared boat, and row to the weedy bay. You will now drop them one by one, about twenty yards apart, outside the weeds, between the shallow and the deep. The pike have been basking all the sultry day in the shallows, and are just emerging from their green covering in search of food. The first object that arrests their hungry eyes and craving stomachs is your tantalizing bait, suspended at such a distance from the surface as to excite no apprehension, and perfectly still. With avidity it is seized and pouched; down goes the bottle: scarcely, perhaps, has it disappeared, when another follows its example; it is nothing uncommon to have four or five all bobbing up and down at the same time. The sport now begins, the angler stretching to his oars, first after one, then another, as they alternately rise and sink. If large pike are hooked, they will often keep their tormentor under water for a minute at a time;

and *to run the whole down* is no contemptible evening's exercise.

THE LONG-LINE FOR PIKE.

In setting a long-line for pike, fix branches of small whip-cord to it, about a yard in length, and three yards apart from each other; the same hooks, as described above, appended to them, and baited in the same way. The line is set in a like situation to the floats, in the following manner:—After driving a pole into the mud, fasten the end of your line to it. Your companion will now row leisurely along, whilst you lift out hook after hook, until you come to the end of the line; having done so, fix it to another pole, and drive this also into the mud. Do not make the line too "taught," or it will not hang low enough for the pike; no floats are required. The line may remain all night, and has thus the morning and evening chance.

EELS.

As lines for eels are of course set at the bottom, a short description of the way to do so may be necessary. Fasten a stone to the end of the line, to which also append a branch with a float—the same at the other end—the line thus lies flat upon the ground, the floats showing exactly where. Eels may be set for in rather deeper places than pike; but be sure there is a soft muddy bottom. Both hooks and baits must be a great deal less

than when setting for pike, the former armed upon strong wire. Cut the fish, or whatever you bait with, into small pieces, just large enough to cover the hook, and fix them firmly on. I recollect catching five or six beautiful eels at one haul, with no other bait than two frogs; the legs set upon some of the hooks like worm, and the bodies, cut into several pieces, for the others. The drawing of an eel-line, what with twisting and slime, is often sorry work; if a large swivel was appended to each hook, it would both tend to prevent this and increase the chance of success. It is of little use to set single hooks for eels, as the great likelihood is that the first that comes may have a mouth too small for sucking in your hook, *but large enough to devour your bait;* in fact, there are twenty small for one large; and from a line of three dozen hooks, it is a very good night's work to kill half-a-dozen large eels.

I have thus given an outline of the different kinds of fishing in fresh-water lochs except perch, which *float and worm recreation*, as it has come under the ban of Dr. Johnson, I might leave the novice to find out for himself. All he has to do is to ascertain their haunt, which any one in the vicinity can show; fasten a float to his line, and a No. 10 hook—bait with an earth-worm —throw in without art, and give the fish time to gorge the bait before striking, or it may slip out of its capacious mouth after being sucked in.

FISHING ON THE SALT-WATER LOCHS.

THE sea-loch has a character peculiarly its own—no wooded islands, no green or pebbly margin, like its inland sister, except perhaps for a short time at full-tide; and the dark mountain more often rises abruptly from its side in craggy and bold relief. It is a novel sight for the traveller, whom the refreshing evening breeze has tempted out of the neighbouring inn, at the landlord's recommendation, to try his fishing-luck with such a clumsy rod and tackle as he had never dreamt of before. The awkward-looking herring "skows," well matched with their black or red sails, scudding in all directions; the nasal twang of the Gaelic, as they pass the bow or stern of his boat, shooting their nets; the hardy, weather-beaten face of the Highlander, always civil in his reply, and courteous in pointing out the most likely ground to the "stranger"—reiterating his injunctions (when his stock of English extends no further) "to keep on the *broo*," yet plainly showing that he expects the like courtesy in return, and that the least slip on your part would immediately make him change his tone,—all this can hardly fail to impress on the mind of the imaginative,

that the spirit of the Highlands, though dormant, is not dead, and to carry back his fancy to the old times of clans, catarans, and claymores.*

The fishing of the sea-loch is not nearly so scientific as that of the inland. The great art lies in being thoroughly acquainted with the best state of the tide for commencing operations—in having a perfect knowledge of the fishing ground, and being able to set your long line with neatness and despatch. Having lived for a couple of years on the banks of two sea-lochs, I had every opportunity (which I did not neglect) of practising

* It is often amusing to see how easily the warm blood will boil, even in those whom years and hardship might have cooled. The following characteristic instances occur to me:—A spruce young gentleman and party of friends, in crossing a ferry, had only one boatman, nearly eighty years old, tugging away at both oars. The young spark, who rather piqued himself upon his performance, offered to relieve him of one. "Na, na," says old Donald, whose manner was the extreme of respect, "ye 'll no be accustomed to this wark." "Me!" says the youngster, "I 'll row any man in your country." The Highlander instantly faced him with a look and tone of perfect equality—"I 've seen the day when ye wad hae been sair pushed!" The other case was that of an old "grannie" in defence of her rights and privileges:—An efficient and benevolent magistrate, who had been very active in his endeavours to stop the progress of the cholera, was inculcating the necessity of cleanliness. Grannie listened with a sort of half-consenting air, which seemed to say—"we must submit to all this for the good that 's to come"—until he mentioned the necessity of removing the dunghill from before the window. Her Highland blood could not endure so audacious an inroad upon her freedom: she determined to make a stand upon this odoriferous ground, proverbial for inspiring pluck even into the craven. With an attitude of defiance, and her fists firmly stuck in her sides, she bawled out—"Deed, Major, ye may tak our *lives*, but ye 'll no tak our *midden*!!"

the different kinds of fishing, and making myself master of the most propitious times of the tide for doing so with success.

TROLLING FOR SEA-TROUT

may be ranked at the head of this fishing; but, before attempting to describe it, I shall mention two curious facts relative to the sea-trout and salmon, which it is difficult to account for. One is, that the former will take greedily in one loch, while you may troll a whole day in its next neighbour, though full of them, without getting a single bite. This was precisely the case in the two lochs alluded to. The other, that, although you may see the huge tails and back-fins of salmon rising all round, I never heard of one taking the bait; and during the whole of my trolling in the salt water, I have only killed one grilse. This is the more strange, as the salmon is not at all shy of the spinning-bait in the fresh-water loch.

The best time to begin fishing for sea-trout is at the turn of the tide, when it begins to ebb: the same rod and tackle as when trolling from a boat in fresh water. The herring-fry, salted, are the most killing bait,) also excellent for large fish in fresh-water lochs,) although minnows are very good: a sand-eel may also do, the black skin pulled over the head, so as to show nothing but the white body; this shines very bright, but,

as it does not spin, is far less deadly than the others. A boatman who thoroughly knows the fishing-ground is indispensable, as it is much more difficult to find out than in the fresh water. Strong eddies, formed by the tide, are often good places; also any bays, especially if mountain burns run into them. The largest size of sea-trout are caught in this way; and when hooked, from the depth and *strength* of the water, make capital play. Large lythe also are frequently taken: these are like passionate boxers—fight furiously for a short time, after which they are quite helpless.

If there is a good pool at the mouth of any mountain burn, by going with your fly-rod during a "spait," or coming down of the water after heavy rain, *and when the tide is at the full,* you may have excellent sport. The trout are all floundering about, ready to take your fly the moment it touches the water. This only lasts for a short time, as they all leave the pool at the receding of the tide. I say nothing of sea-trout or salmon-flies, which vary so much in the different lochs, rivers, and streams, that every angler should be able to dress them for himself. Any fishing-tackle maker will be happy to teach him *for a consideration.* He has then only to learn from an approved hand near what flies are best for the loch or stream he intends to fish, and tie them accordingly.

THE LONG-LINE.

The eel-line, already noticed, is precisely the long-line in miniature, with the exception of the hooks, which are such coarse, blunt-looking weapons, that the wonder is how they catch at all. They are sold for a mere trifle at any of the shops in the sea-port towns, and tied on with a wax end, but sometimes only with a knot of the twine itself: a turn of the wire on the shank enables you to do this. A baiting basket is required, one end for the line, the other for the baited hooks, which are placed in regular rows. My line had only three hundred hooks, but some have double that number. Herring, cut into small pieces, are the best bait: I required about a dozen for one setting, provided I eked out with mussels, but eighteen or twenty were necessary if the line was baited exclusively with herring. Mussels, however, drop off the hook so easily, that when herring can be procured they are seldom used. Seeing the long-line baited, set, and drawn, will thoroughly teach any one who has an idea of fishing—*writing* how to do so never will. It generally took me about an hour and a half to bait mine; so I taught a boy, who, after two or three lessons, could bait as well as myself.

The best time to set the long-line is after low water,

when the tide has flowed a little, and brought the fish with it. To know the different "hauls"* is most important, as your success in a great measure depends upon the selection of a good one. After the line is set, *it should be left exactly one hour;* and, if you have hit upon a shoal, you will most likely half fill the boat. I have several times killed about a dozen, from twenty to fifty pounds-weight, besides quantities of smaller. The fish for the most part taken are cod, ling, haddock, skate, large flounders, and enormous conger-eels, some of the latter more than half the length of your boat, and as thick as a man's leg. These would generally be thrown back again, were it not for the havoc they make among the other fish, and the damage they do to the set-lines. Their throats are, therefore, cut as soon as they are pulled up, after which operation they will live for hours. The skate is also very tenacious of life; and nothing can be more absurd than the grotesque, pompous faces it will continue to exhibit for sometime after being deposited in the boat. The round shape of its jagged crown is exactly like a judge's wig; and when it puffs out its cheeks, the whole face and head so forcibly remind one of those learned lords, that you almost fancy you hear it pronouncing sentence upon the devoted congers. The conger, if dressed like other fish, is uneatable; but when the oil is taken out,

* Banks, and parts of the loch, where the shoals of fish congregate.

by parboiling, some people prefer it to cod. Care should be taken to untwist the line as much as possible when drawing it, which saves a deal of trouble afterwards. There is generally so much filth and discomfort in the whole business, that gentlemen seldom care to engage in it, except a few times from curiosity.*

THE HAND-LINE.

When a boy, I used to be much delighted with the hand-line, and never failed to practise it as opportunity offered. It is simply a piece of whalebone fastened cross-wise to the line, and a hook at each end, tied upon strong gut, with a heavy lead in the centre. This lead sinks the line rapidly to the bottom, which it no sooner touches than you feel it strike. You are thus enabled to keep moving the hooks a yard or two up, and then sink them to the ground again, which entices the fish. All the art of the hand-line is to pull up *the instant* you feel a bite, and never to

* Thunder is generally believed to be destructive to fishing of all kinds—and so it often is. I, however, know an instance, when a friend of mine set his long-line just before a tremendous storm, which raged the whole hour it was in the water. As soon as it cleared, he rowed to his line, with no hope of success for that day: to his astonishment it was perfectly loaded with heavy fish. Something similar happened to myself, when going to fish the Almond, near Edinburgh. I was overtaken by a thunder-storm when close to the river; directly upon its subsiding, I commenced fishing, and at the second or third throw hooked a fine trout. After a few hours I returned home, having had excellent sport.

slacken till the fish is safe in the boat. Keep changing your ground, and dropping your anchor, unless the fish seem taking. Mussels are the best bait; and it is a good plan to throw a few into the water, as well as the empty shells.

Hand-line fishing may be followed at any time, but is best at the flow of the tide. As the water retires, shift your position further down the loch, and *vice versâ*. Almost every cottage on the banks can supply a hand-line, and every inmate knows how to use it.

THE WHITE FEATHER.

To some *highly facetious* authors, a pun upon the white feather might prove a prize, so I shall make them a present of it instead of my readers, and proceed to its dressing and use. Of all apologies for a fly, this is the clumsiest; it is only a swan's or goose's feather tied round a large and very coarse bait-hook, without the least pretence to art; any man who had never dressed a fly in his life would be as successful in the attempt as the most finished performer.* The rod and line are in

* Worsted is occasionally used instead of the feather, and it is sometimes a killing way to have a different colour for *each* rod—viz. white for one, yellow for another, and red for a third. This last is best for mackerel; and in some states of the water and sky, both lythe and seithe, especially the former, prefer the yellow to the white. It is a curious fact regarding the seithe, that when it grows old it changes both its nature and appearance; the colour is nearly black instead of the rich green; it grows to a great size, and gains a formidable set of teeth. It is then

perfect keeping with the fly; a bamboo-cane, or young hazel-tree, with ten or twelve yards of oiled cord, and a length or two of double or triple gut next the hook: no reel is used.

The fish generally caught in this way are lythe and seithe, although mackerel will rise freely also; when fishing for the former, good double gut may be strong enough, but if large fish are expected, I should always recommend triple. Seithe take best in the morning and evening, and a slight breeze is rather an advantage: although the fly is sometimes sunk a little with lead, it is more often fished with at the top. You may begin at any state of the tide, and row over all the sunk banks and places where the fish frequent, at a slow rate, with three or four rods placed regularly in the stern of the boat. When a small seithe is hooked, pull it in at once, and out with the rod again as fast as possible: sometimes nearly all the rods have a fish at the same time. In lythe fishing you need not launch your boat till low water; sink the fly with a couple of buck-shot, and troll on the brow, where it descends perpendicularly; this is easily seen at that state of the tide. When you hook a large fish, try to prevent it getting down, or you may be obliged to throw the

called a stanlock, or black salmon, and is quite as destructive to other fish as the conger-eel. In this stage it is never known to rise to the fly, but it is occasionally taken by the hand or long-line.

rod overboard, in case the lythe should break away; but, if you can manage to swing it about at the top for a short time, it will soon be unable to offer any resistance.

Trolling with the white feather has this recommendation, that it may be enjoyed by an invalid or party of ladies—and, certainly, a more delightful way of spending the cool of a summer evening cannot be imagined: rowing slowly along those romantic shores—hearing the distant gurgle of the dwindled mountain brook in its steep descent, and ever and anon passing the blue curling smoke of a shepherd's or fisherman's grass-topped hut upon the banks.

I have now, I think, given all the *necessary* instructions in fresh-water and sea-loch fishing; and feel confident that, by following them, the admirer of "flood and fell," even if a beginner in angling, may return from his fishing tour, having as often filled his creel from their depths as gratified his taste with their scenery.

THE MOOR BURN.

I DON'T know whether the moor burn more properly belongs to the moor or the loch; but, as it begins in the one and ends in the other, it was rather an omission on my part to have left it out in my first edition, especially as at certain times of the year it affords excellent sport to the angler who penetrates the wilds.

When in ordinary trim, the moor burn is generally neglected by the finished adept, as a more fitting amusement for the school-boy during his summer holidays; and certainly nothing can be easier than to kill a basketful of burn-trout at such a season. To do this in as short a time as possible, treat them with earth-worms baited upon a smallish hook. They will rise well at the fly, but the worm is more deadly. As you have often queer-looking places to scramble up, where a longer and smarter turn-out would be sadly in the way, use a coarse short rod, very small reel, and casting-line of good single gut. I have generally been most successful when the burn was small, the trout being then eager for worms, having tasted few since the last flood. The great point at such a

time is to keep out of sight, by dropping the bait over a rock, or from behind a bush or tuft of heather. There is generally sufficient motion in these rocky streams to prevent your line from being seen by the trout, and they will seize the bait with such avidity that I have sometimes, when a boy, taken a dozen out of one pool or *lyn*, as they are called. Many prefer the burn a little swollen, and in this state it is certainly easier for the unscientific craftsman, who is then much less likely to be observed by the trout. But would he take proper care to conceal himself, he would not only find them more greedy when the burn is small, but would be better able to detect their usual haunts, which they are very apt to leave when the water rises. When the lyns are black, and whirl round in eddies, let the bait humour the water, in fact the only art in fishing them is to make the worm appear naturally to follow the course of the stream. When again the burn flows over *level ground*, lengthen your line, as you have there more difficulty to keep out of sight. Fish all the streams and deep-looking places, and, if need be, don't grudge to crawl to them on hand and knee, or you will often be detected by the quick-sighted trout when the water is clear. To fish the moor burn in this way is capital practice for the novice in angling; with a little attention, he will seldom return with an empty creel. In the Balnaguard burn, which runs into the

Tay near Logierait in Perthshire, I killed nine dozen and two in a few hours. I tried the burn by the advice of an old gardener, who told me he had one day killed nine dozen in it himself. So having equalled him, with two to spare, I washed my hands of bait-fishing during the rest of my sojourn on the banks of the Tay.

Of trout so caught, not above one in fifty averages a quarter of a pound. But there is another manner of fishing the deep lyns and rocky eddies, which is difficult, and sometimes even dangerous, except for a steady head and practised hand. Yet if love of adventure should entice the angler to try it, he will be rewarded by larger trout, and perhaps a heavier creel.

In most of the small Highland burns, there is a succession of cataracts and pools, with a parapet of rock rising perpendicularly on each side, and often scarcely footing enough for a dog to pass. The greater proportion of picturesque looking *brethren of the angle* would almost start at the idea of continuing their pastime under such disadvantages. They therefore make a circuit, and come down again upon the burn, where it is more easy to fish, and the ground less rugged. The trout in these places are thus left till many of them grow large, and each taking possession of a favourite nook, drives all the smaller fry away. The difficulty of reaching these places is, I admit, often great, the angler sometimes having to scramble up

on his hands and knees, covered with wet moss or gravel, and then to drag his fishing-rod after him. These lyns should always be fished up stream, otherwise the moment you appear at the top of the waterfall or rock, the trout are very likely to see you, and slink into their hiding-place. The burn, however, must always be low, as at no other time can you distinguish the snug retreat of these little tyrants, which indeed they often leave, during the slightest flood, in search of prey. By fishing up the stream, your head will be on a level with the different eddies and pools, as they successively present themselves, and the rest of your person out of sight. Hold the baited hook with the left hand, jerking out the rod, under-handed, with your right, so as to make the bait fall softly at the lower end of the pool. The trout always take their station either there or at the top where the water flows in, ready to pounce on worms, snails, slugs, &c. as they enter or leave the pool. Should a trout seize the bait, a little time may be given to allow it to gorge, which it will most likely do without much ceremony. If large, care must be taken to prevent it from getting to the top of the lyn, which may probably harbour another expectant. The best plan is, if possible, to persuade it to descend into the pool below.* Having deposited the half-pounder in your

* In fishing a small pool, where you have reason to think the salmon have congregated, the same method ought to be adopted. When you hook

creel, you will now crawl upon hands and knees, just so near the top of the lyn as will enable you to drop the bait immediately below the bubbling foam, nearly as favourite a station for an over-grown monopolizing trout as the other. Except in such situations the burn-trout seldom exceeds a quarter of a pound, and may be pulled out with single gut, without much risk of breaking it. In these lyns, however, I have occasionally taken them upwards of a pound, which is easily accounted for. As soon as the trout grows to a sufficient size to intimidate his pigmy neighbours, he falls back into the best pool for feeding, not occupied by a greater giant than himself, and as these lyns are almost always in precipices very difficult of access, he remains undisturbed and alone, or with a single companion, driving all others away, until he may at last attain to a pound weight.

I have seen two curious instances of the rapid growth of the burn-trout under such circumstances, from the size of a par to fully half a lb. They were deposited in separate spring-wells, about three feet deep and five round. The trout in neither had any means of escape,

one, tumble him over out of the pool down stream; at all events, prevent him, if you possibly can, from disturbing the throat, where there may be several more. If the fish are at all tractable when first hooked, several may in this way be taken out of the same pool; whereas by fishing down stream, should a salmon be hooked at the throat of the pool, he will so frighten the others that very probably no more may rise.

and became so tame as to seize worms, minnows, &c. when dropped from the hand. One of them was within a hundred yards of Arden Connel house in Dumbartonshire, where I then lived. It had been in the spring about four years, and although large-headed and lean-looking as all overgrown burn-trout are, seemed in good health and *spirits*. It always came to the top of the water for the remains of my minnows, when I returned from trolling; and on one occasion I emptied a pailful of live ones into the spring, which not only gave it several hearty meals, but exercise and amusement to boot. It pursued and seized them with a rapidity the eye could scarcely follow. At last the poor minnows, from several dozen, decreased in number to three or four, who only escaped the fate of their companions by discovering a small crack between two stones; and I noticed that the trout soon ceased to molest them, having discovered that the attempt would be vain, as they always kept close to their refuge. This trout, I believe, is still alive, but the other, I have heard, is dead, after a solitary existence in the spring of nine years' duration!

But to return to the burn. Although when small or in ordinary trim the angler must be content with its common inmates, yet the time to fish it in perfection is during the floods at the end of summer and beginning of autumn. The sea-trout, salmon, and grilse then come up in great numbers. To select the proper

moment for commencing operations is the great point. Many of the smaller burns remain in proper trim for so short a time that the angler ought to be waiting at the side, ready to begin fishing as soon as the white muddy water has run out, and the burn assumes the deep red tinge. After it decreases to a certain point, he will hardly rise a single fish. Nay, he would even stand a better chance *before* the water is sufficiently clear, with an enormous gaudy fly, with which, should he come half an hour too soon, he may amuse himself until it is time to put on the proper ones.

As I have already said, every experienced angler is well aware how capricious are the salmon, sea-trout, and grilse of different streams as to their flies. I was in the habit of fishing sea-trout in three burns in the same neighbourhood, (two of them running into the same sea-loch,) each of which had its favourite fly. I often put on the chosen three, and fished them all in turn; but invariably, when the water was in *its best state*, the fish in each were most constant to their own fly. I merely mention the fact without attempting to account for it, and will name the flies to show that the difference was considerable: one was a yellow and green, or red and green body, red hackle, and either teal or light-speckled mallard-wing. Another, a blue body, red hackle, and turkey-wing. And the third, (for the burn which ran into a different loch,) a green

body, thread of gold tinsel, red hackle, and dark mottled mallard wing. The second mentioned of these flies, with the addition of an orange tuft, is the best that can be used for salmon on the Tweed, if the water is in its ordinary state; and by lessening the hook as the river decreases, you may continue to kill fish with it, when the water is so small, that they will not look at any other.*

As to the most killing flies for particular burns, it is impossible that any rule can be given; this is a point which one's own observation, or the information of adepts in the neighbourhood, alone can decide. But supposing them chosen, we will now proceed to throw them. If unacquainted with the burn, you should never pass over the streams, eddies, &c. when it first runs clear, and as it decreases in size pay most attention to the pools. If the "spate" or flood has not been very heavy, the fish will soon refuse to rise at all. It

* The best turkey feathers for the wings of salmon and sea-trout flies are those with the smallest spots,—very difficult to procure; and nothing can stand a comparison with the forked tail of the kite, when a red-brown wing is required for salmon.

Flies for salmon ought to be fastened to the gut in a different manner from any others, viz., with a small loop of double or triple gut, through which the length of gut is passed and tied with a double knot. You may thus fish always with good strong single gut, next the hook, cutting it off and making a fresh knot, whenever it chafes at the shank. This method, of course, will not be very strenuously recommended at the fishing-tackle makers, as, by the usual way, the fly is of no more use when the gut cracks or chafes close to the hook, which, unless double, or even triple, it will soon do.

is then that a man who knows the water will often kill a fish or two when perhaps an angler, equally expert but without this advantage, would stand little chance. I once in this way astonished a fellow-craftsman, no mean performer either: I was at the burn-side, just at the proper moment, and having fished the best of the water, was about to return after killing a couple of fine sea-trout, when I saw a rival, with whom I was unacquainted, rushing down to the bank. His first salutation was, "Are the fish rising?" He then desired to see my flies, being a stranger to the burn. As he seemed what is called "a *greedy* angler," I thought it no harm to take a *rise* out of *him*. The water by this time was long past its best; so, after supplying him with a fly, I said I would not interfere, but walk down and show him the casts. He was evidently a good fisher, but, as I anticipated, did not kill a fish, and only rose one. In the burn there was one very strong eddy, where the trout never rose to the fly, but where I seldom missed taking one with the worm, when the water was at all swollen. On coming near this place, I said, "if he had done nothing it was not his fault, but that I would now try my luck." I then let him go a good way a-head, took off my flies, put on a bait-hook and worm, and from this place pulled out two whitlings half a pound weight. I then whipped on my flies again, and overtook him at the end of the

burn. I could hardly keep my gravity at his astonished face when I showed him my success. He never suspected the bait, and I soon took my leave, wishing him better sport the next spate!

Sea-trout, after the burn has run small, will never rise to the fly, they fall back to the pools. and, as anglers say, *stick to the bottom*, where they may often be seen. At such times they are also very unwilling to take a bait, and the only chance is to try both pools and streams with the minnow *after it becomes nearly dark*. I recollect once, when the water was quite dwindled, taking a very fine one with worm; but although I have often tried the same pools before and since, never with success. I had been fishing a small moor loch in company with another angler, and thought of returning home by the burn, and trying the steep lyns with bait for a sea-trout. My companion laughed at the idea, saying, that to catch one then was totally out of the question. I thought the same, but having plenty of time, resolved to make the attempt; so, selecting one or two of the largest pools, where the rocks on each side rose perpendicularly, darkening the water, I gently and slowly let down the bait, allowing the worm, but no part of the line, to touch the water. After one or two attempts I hooked and killed a fine trout, fresh from the sea, and as white as silver. So small was the burn that he never even tried to get out of the pool, and my

great difficulty was to scramble down the precipice in order to secure him. This trifling occurrence would not be worth mentioning, did it not serve to show that an angler always *has a chance*, however little he suspects it, if his energy and perseverance do not fail. Perhaps the following may be a still better instance of the efficacy of this latter qualification, when science and skill have been found unavailing. One of the fat, lazy trout of the Thames, which I detected feeding near one of the locks above Henley bridge, after refusing my artificial flies, a bleak, and a minnow, I hooked at last with a common *bee* sunk like worm, which I had intended for a chub, and happened to think might take his fancy!*

Having named the noble Thames, I cannot let him pass without a tribute, and, if I may be permitted, will offer a few hints on river-fishing, though not properly belonging to my subject. I have had, perhaps, nearly as much practice in the sluggish and muddy waters of the Lowlands as in the rapid and rocky Highland burns; and, if I cannot but prefer those to which early association bind me, yet the pleasure of wandering along the green banks of the southern streams, as they sweep through the clovery meadow or the fringing copse, is

* The above examples are not related for imitation, as they would probably be unsuccessful ninety-nine times out of a hundred, but merely to enforce the advantage of patience—the angler's good genius.

perhaps increased by contrasting them with the gray rocks and purple hills of my country; while the laugh of the wood-pecker, the song of the nightingale, the "azure plume" of the little halcyon as he flits past on a calm summer's eve, are noticed with a more lively interest when substituted for the swoop of the eagle and the crow of the "gor-cock."

RIVER-ANGLING.

My first advice to the beginner in river-fishing is to give himself little trouble about the old-fashioned descriptions and arrangement of flies, such as good old *Isaac* (unequalled in every other department) has so elaborately, and, I must say, so unnecessarily discussed. The *theory* of fly-fishing has been much simplified since his day, and a few directions as to its *practice* are all I think necessary to give. For the sake of illustration, I will take the Almond and Water of Leith near Colt Bridge, two streams well known to all Edinburgh anglers, and which also bear a strong resemblance to many of the English rivers. The trout in both these waters, especially the latter, are shy, well fed, and lazy; and here, if anywhere, one would imagine the whole absurd catalogue of artificial flies would be needed to tempt their dainty appetites. So far, however, from this being the case, I have never used more than three or four different kinds during the whole spring and summer, and was generally

at least as successful as any of my numerous competitors. These flies were the same as those I have mentioned under loch-fishing, only of course suiting the size of the hook to the nature and quality of the stream, whether it is much whipped over, &c. If the angler pleases, he may vary the mouse-body to the water-rat, which will make it a little darker for a bright day; and a bunting's is the best blae-wing he can use. When the water is very small, the mallard and teal-wings, for the sake of lightness, I have occasionally omitted, and fished with the flies as palmers. At Colt Bridge, especially, the trout, from being constantly harassed with anglers, require very fine fishing. I have taken most of the fat, heavy ones either with the mouse-body and snipe, or bunting-wing, or a small black palmer, hook an 0 or No. 1 at the largest. If the water should be rather swelled and discoloured, always use the mallard-wing and red hackle for the trail, and it is a good plan to clip off a piece of the shank of the hook before tying the fly. You may thus fish with a No. 2 as lightly as a 1, which is a great point in all still waters where the trout are shy.

To fish these deeps with success, the angler must not only be able to throw a long line most delicately, but also attain the art of making his fly alight within an inch of any given point, in order to take advantage of the rises of the trout. When the fly is dropped in the *centre of the ring, the instant after the trout has belled up,* it

is ten times more likely to rise again than if the fly touched the water at ever so short a distance, even if thrown as lightly as possible and clearly seen by the trout. There is more art in this than most anglers are aware of. In dragging the cast, the gut should not cause the *slightest ripple*. To prevent which the flies must be sunk a little, and the motion slow. It is also very desirable to attain the knack of throwing well when trees are close behind you; as trout, especially in summer, are apt to harbour under them for the sake of the insects that are blown off into the water beneath.

There is often in summer a small black fly that keeps playing on the top of the water, and every now and then alighting for a moment, as if tempting its aquatic foe. When the angler sees this fly thus sporting with the jaws of death, let him always have a small black hackle on his cast. There is also another summer-fly which comes down upon the river in great numbers,—they keep all together, and hover about two or three inches above the water. The trout follow them in shoals, and in the Almond I have seen half a dozen heads at a time darting up at the busy throng above. As these flies do not alight on the water even for an instant, the trout are all intent on seizing them *in the air;* and there being generally a dead calm where these insects congregate, your cast, though thrown ever so lightly, has more the effect of alarming than enticing the fish. It is most

tantalizing, but all that can be done is to take a few light casts now and then, *stopping whenever the trout cease to rise*. By this cautious proceeding, you may take one or two of the most greedy. When I have caught trout at such times, I have observed that they as often as not took the fly on the cast least resembling the insect.

It would be treason to doubt the omnipotence of the May-fly, whose reign, however, seldom begins in Scotland till June. The more ignorant the angler the more determined will he be to have the imitation on his cast when the natural fly is on the water. Well, let him,—it will kill, but whether better, either in May or June, than those I have named, let the man who can deftly throw them judge for himself. I was at one time as great a stickler for the May-fly as any one, but for the last few years have had none upon my cast, and never missed his company. I don't profess to be a theorist in my fishing, but have come to the conclusion that a few judicious shades from light to dark are quite sufficient when fishing with *small flies* for yellow trout, whether or not they take them for a known insect; and the least observant man, by having four of the flies I have mentioned on his cast, will soon find out whether light, dark, or medium is the order of the day.

When river-fishing, I never trouble myself with more tackle than three or four casts round my hat, each having a different trail. Thus being able to fish with the fly *as*

trail, which seems for the time the favourite. If unacquainted with the stream, it may be as well to have a few additional casts, with the hooks of different sizes.

In some very muddy waters, such as the Ale in Selkirkshire, (exactly the colour of its name,) a single thread of silver is recommended when fishing with a dark fly; I tried this, but found a red palmer quite as effective. No doubt, however, the tinsel is good in such a case, though I have seldom seen a river discoloured enough to require it.

Another hint to the young angler is to mind what he is about when he approaches the still deeps of the river. Many are apt to pass them by altogether, and scarcely try a cast until they come to the pools and streams again. Perhaps the best test of a finished performer is the manner in which he fishes these dead deep places, especially if there is little wind, for they generally harbour the largest and best fed fish, which are, of course, the most suspicious and difficult to rise. We will suppose a first-rate angler approaching one of these unrippled deeps: his tackle is of the very lightest description—he is watching with a hawk's eye for the rising of a trout; should he see one, he instantly moves off till within rather a distant cast of the place, taking advantage of any bush or tuft of reeds which may the better conceal him, or, if necessary, going down on his knee, ready to drop his cast, light as

gossamer, right across the next circle, which the crafty fish may make by sucking down another incautious fly. If the trout should rise, he is not unlikely to be one well worth hooking, and to give good sport in such quiet water. When there is breeze enough to make much ripple, it may prevent any but a quick and practised eye from seeing the rises *most worth notice;* in which case the water should be fished with as long a line and as light casts as possible. You need not despair should trees or any other obstacle prevent your sweep from being so free as otherwise it ought, for if you are suitably dressed, and make no rapid motions, you will be so masked by the trees or bushes as to allow of a much nearer approach and shorter cast. In the Water of Leith there are two pools a little way above the bridge, overshadowed by old trees and much frequented by large heavy trout. There I have been often more successful than when my sweep was perfectly unencumbered, and I must be allowed to mention a curious circumstance which happened to me last summer in one of these said pools. Having tied a cast rather hurriedly in the morning, I hooked a good fish upon my bob, a mouse-body and snipe-wing, when the single knot slipped. Two days after, when fishing the same place, I again hooked and killed a fine trout, upwards of a pound weight, and, to my astonishment, my own handiwork with two inches of gut was sticking in his lip. One of the fraternity,

sedulously employed on the opposite bank, remarked, that "it must have been an honest trout, for it was not for want of temptation that he kept the hook for the right owner!" He also related a fact of the same kind which had happened a week or two before:—A friend of his was fishing with minnow, when the tackle caught in a tree behind, and, not being able to reach it, he had broken the gut. Soon after, when some one was shaking the tree, to secure the tackle, it dropped off into the water, and, being slightly loaded with lead, immediately sunk. Next day an eel was taken at a set line with a piece of gut hanging out of its mouth, and the very person who had lost the tackle being on the spot, it occurred to him that it might be his, which proved to be the case.

The insensibility to pain, which an angler can scarcely fail to notice in these cold-blooded creatures, is a point which happily redeems from cruelty the necessary inflictions of his craft. I recollect catching three fine trout one evening when trolling on Loch Lomond with a friend, and we discovered hanging out of the mouth of one of them a strong hair line. On opening the fish we found a large bait-hook fixed firmly in its stomach, the wicker and part of the hook being nearly digested. The creature had evidently been caught and broke away from a set-line, and, though hooked in so vital a part, not only took our bait greedily, made a most capital fight for a

quarter of an hour, but was in the very finest condition, having fattened on his hard fare instead of wasting from torture.

The last hint I have to give on the still parts of the river is, that when the large trout refuse to rise, being sated with summer-flies, a *small* minnow about dusk is most likely to succeed.

With regard to the streams, and more rapid parts of the river, it certainly requires practice to find out the feeding-places of trout. There is always a good cast just where the water begins to steady itself, after falling and foaming over a ledge of rock,—also in the eddies caused by roots, stones, branches of trees, &c. An angler who loves his craft will very soon become knowing in this department, and will then find much less difficulty here than in the still deeps. Of course, the more rapid the water the less likely is the trout to observe either a fisher on the banks or his line, though perchance clumsily thrown. But show me the man who can fish the *still* parts of the river with tact and science, and I will be answerable for the rest of his performance. As to wind, which most anglers make such a fuss about, although a moderate breeze is a *sine quâ non* in loch-fishing, and also an advantage to the clumsy craftsman on the river, yet if the water is in its best state, and the sun not very bright, a first-rate angler would rather have *too little* than *too much*.

The above observations apply equally to all the rivers and streams I have fished, and my practice has been in many parts of England, as well as north, south, east, and west of Scotland.

ON EAGLES.

FEW sportsmen, who have been much in the wilds of Scotland, have not occasionally seen an eagle; but, except at the hatching season, it is extremely difficult to get a shot at one. Even then it is no easy task, for the nest is often in the face of some precipice which few dare to scale.

The golden-eagle is not nearly so great a foe to the farmer as to the sportsman; for although a pair, having young ones, will occasionally pounce upon very young and unprotected lambs, and continue their depredations until scared away, the more usual prey consists of hares, rabbits, and grouse—a fact sufficiently proved by the feathers and bones found in their eyries. A pair used to build every year in Balquhidder, another in Glen-Ogle, and a third in Glenartney. The shepherds seldom molested the old ones; but by means of ladders, at considerable risk, took the young and sold them. One of these brought to Callander, not long ago, when scarcely full-fledged, would seize a live cat thrown to it for food, and, bearing it away with the greatest ease, tear it to pieces, the cat unable to offer any resistance, and

OSPREY, OR WATER EAGLE.

uttering the most horrid yells. From the havoc they made among the game, especially when they had young, the keepers in the neighbourhood have been very diligent of late years in searching out the eyries, and trapping the old birds; so that now, in this part of Perthshire, there is not one for three nests that there were formerly.

I recollect, some time ago, an eyrie in Glen-Luss, where a pair hatched yearly; but since the female was shot, no others have haunted the place. The shooting of this eagle was a service of great danger, and the man who undertook it a most hardy and determined fellow. The cliff was nearly perpendicular, and the only way of access was over the top, where a single false step would have sent him headlong into the gulf below. After creeping down a considerable way, he saw the eagle sitting on her eggs, a long shot off; but his gun was loaded with swanshot, so, taking a deliberate aim, he fired; she gave one shrill scream, extended her wings, and died on her nest. His greatest difficulty now was, how to avail himself of his success. He was not, however, the man to be balked: so, at the most imminent risk, he managed to get to the eyrie, tumbled the eagle over the cliff, and pocketed the two eggs. They were set under a hen but did not hatch. Had they been left, the male would, probably, have brought them out, as he has been often known

to do in similar cases. I afterwards broke one of the shells, and was quite astonished at its thickness.

A fair shot may sometimes be got at the male when there are young ones in the nest, as he will often swoop down in their defence: at any other time, he is the most shy and wild of birds. I only know of one instance to the contrary, and that was in the depth of a very severe winter, when the creature was rendered desperate by hunger. The gamekeeper of my late father was shooting wild-fowl, and having killed one, sent his retriever to fetch it out of the water. The dog was in the act of doing so, when an eagle stooped down, and seizing him, endeavoured to carry off the duck: it was only by shouting with all his might that the keeper could alarm the eagle so far as to make it fly a little clear of the dog, when he shot it with his second barrel. The scuffle took place only twenty yards from where he stood, and he told me that he thought the eagle would certainly have drowned his dog.

When two eagles are in pursuit of a hare, they show great tact—it is exactly as if two well-matched greyhounds were turning a hare—as one rises, the other descends, until poor puss is tired out: when one of them succeeds in catching her, it fixes a claw in her back, and holds by the ground with the other, striking all the time with its beak. I have several times seen eagles coursed

in the same way by carrion-crows and ravens, whose territories they had invaded: the eagle generally seems to have enough to do in keeping clear of his sable foes, and every now and then gives a loud whistle or scream. If the eagle is at all alarmed when in pursuit of his prey, he instantly bears it off alive. Where alpine hares are plentiful, it is no unfrequent occurrence, when the sportsman starts one, for an eagle to pounce down and carry it off, struggling, with the greatest ease: in this case, he always allows the hare to run a long way out of shot before he strikes, and is apt to miss altogether. When no enemy is near, he generally adopts the more sure way of tiring out his game.

The colour of the golden-eagle differs very much: some are so dark as almost to justify the name of "the black eagle," which they are often called in the Highlands—in others, the golden tint is very bright; and many are of an even muddy-brown. I do not think that the age of the bird has anything to do with this, as I have seen young and old equally variable. The sure mark of a young one is the degree of white on the tail: the first year the upper half is pure, which gradually becomes less so by streaks of brown—about the third or fourth year no white is to be seen.

THE SEA EAGLE.

I have not had an opportunity of noticing the habits of the sea-eagle, never having been for any time in the neighbourhood of its haunts. All my information regarding them is derived from watching one or two tame ones which I met with in Ireland, where they are more numerous than in Scotland, whose mountains are the grand resort of the golden-eagle. The prey of both seems pretty much alike, except that the sea-eagle is fonder of dead carcases, which may in part account for its partiality to the sea-shore. Those I allude to devoured crows, jackdaws, livers, fish, or almost any carrion that was thrown to them. Their eyries are mostly in the precipitous cliffs on the coast.

The sea-eagle is rather larger than the golden, and of a lighter brown. The bill, which is longer and broader, but not so hooked as the other, is of a dull yellowish white. The whole of the tail-feathers of the young ones are brown, when they gradually change to white, which is complete about the fourth year—the very reverse of the golden-eagle. The tail is also shorter, and the legs are not feathered to the toes, like the other; but quite enough to show that the bird was not intended to subsist by fishing, like the osprey, whose legs are bare to the thighs, which have only a thin covering of short feathers.

THE OSPREY.

The osprey, or water-eagle, frequents many of the Highland lochs; a pair had their eyrie for many years on the top of a ruin, in a small island on Loch Lomond. I am sorry to say I was the means of their leaving that haunt, which they had occupied for generations.

It was their custom, when a boat approached the island, to come out and meet it, always keeping at a most respectful distance, flying round in very wide circles until the boat left the place, when, having escorted it a considerable way, they would return and settle on the ruin. Aware of their habit, I went, when a very young sportsman, with a gamekeeper, and having concealed myself behind the stump of an old tree, desired him to pull away the boat. The ospreys, after following him the usual distance, returned, and gradually narrowing their circles, the female, at last, came within fair distance—I fired, and shot her. Not content with this, the gamekeeper and I ascended the ruin, and finding nothing in the nest but a large sea-trout, half-eaten, we set it in a trap, and returning, after two or three hours, found the male caught by the legs. They were a beautiful pair: the female, as in most birds of prey, being considerably the largest—the woodcut is a most correct likeness. The eggs of these ospreys

had been regularly taken every year, and yet they never forsook their eyrie. It was a beautiful sight to see them sail into our bay on a calm summer night, and flying round it several times, swoop down upon a good-sized pike, and bear it away as if it had been a minnow.

I have been told, but cannot vouch for the truth of it, that they have another method of taking their prey in warm weather, when fish bask near the shore. They fix one claw in a weed or bush, and strike the other into the fish; but I never saw them attempt any other mode of "leistering" than that I have mentioned: when they see a fish, they immediately settle in the air—lower their flight, and settle again—then strike down like a dart. They always seize prey with their claws, the outer toes of which turn round a considerable way, which gives them a larger and firmer grasp. Owls have also this power, to enable them with greater certainty to secure their almost equally agile victims; while the fern-owl has the toe turned round like a parrot, to assist it in the difficult task of catching insects in the air. But if this were the case with the others, although it might be an advantage in the first instance, it would very considerably weaken their hold when prey was struck.

I remember seeing another pair of ospreys on Loch Menteith, that had their eyrie on the gnarled branch

of an old tree. They became so accustomed to the man who lets boats there, that the female never even left her nest when he landed on the island, unless a stranger was with him. Once, when he returned home after a short absence, he saw one of them sitting on the tree, making a kind of wailing cry: suspecting all was not right, he rowed to the island, and found the female was missing, and the nest harried. They have never hatched there since: the male has been frequently seen, but he has never found another mate. When they had young, they did not confine their depredations to Loch Menteith, but used to go, in quest of prey, to the other lochs in the neighbourhood; and, in the evening, would fly down the glen, carrying a fish a foot long in their claws.

The nest of the osprey is lined with coarse water-plants and grasses: the outside fenced with thick boughs, some of them four inches round, and three feet and a-half long: proof enough of the strength of its legs and wings. The eggs are as large as a hen's, with reddish-brown spots. The osprey is about the size of the herring-gull; the breast nearly white, spotted with brown; back and wings dull brown; the thighs very muscular; legs and claws, which are of bluish flesh colour, equally so.

THE KITE.

ALTHOUGH abounding in the mountainous regions of Scotland, the kite is not confined to them: I have frequently met with it in the Lowlands, and it is common in Wales. To look at the elegance of its form and the grace of its movements, the keenness of its eye, the strength of its wings, and the aptitude of its claws for seizing prey, one would suppose the kite to be a very mischievous bird; but none of the hawk tribe are less so: even the buzzard, albeit no great adept, is much its superior in the art of destruction. The kite has no quickness of flight, yet is admirably fitted for his mode of life. Subsisting in a great measure on carrion and reptiles, his keen eye and unwearied wing are of the greatest service in discovering his food. Fish, when he can get it, he considers a dainty morsel, and may be most successfully trapped with this bait. I found out his weak point, by noticing the avidity with which he would devour the refuse of the net the day after a draught. I have watched him with delight, sailing aloft with such perfect ease, that the only perceptible motion was that of his tail, piloting him like a helm in his aërial circles—scrutinizing, with his telescopic eye, every field and valley where he might hope to find

a prey, and then, suddenly lowering his flight and lessening his circles, gradually alight upon some object, so small that it seemed scarcely possible he could have seen it from such a height.

Indeed, were the sight of the blue falcon and hen-harrier equal to that of the kite, their havoc upon our moors would be much greater than it now is; but their manner of seeking food is quite a contrast to his. In beating the ground for prey, they, especially the latter, seldom rise higher than twenty yards; but, when once it is sprung, their activity in pursuit is unrivalled. Perhaps I may here be excused for digressing so far as to mention an anecdote of the blue or peregrine falcon, showing that it will beat game out of the heather, and destroy it on the ground: many, I know, suppose it never strikes but on wing. When out breaking a young dog upon the Perthshire moors, I put up a grouse, which, after flying some distance, was pursued by a blue falcon. The poor grouse, seeing it had no chance, dropped down in the heather; but it was too late, the hawk was directly above. It immediately alighted, beat about the heather for a minute, and presently the grouse fluttered out before it. I saw the chase for about ten yards, when they ran behind a hillock, and on my going up to the place, the falcon rose, and there lay the grouse decapitated.

But, to return to the kite—he is the shiest of birds; not even in the hatching season can you often get a shot at him. I have frequently found the nests: they are much like the carrion-crow's, only larger and more impervious. They are lined with whatever the birds can pick up—such as old stockings, worsted gloves, wool or indeed anything soft and warm. There are seldom more than three eggs, often only a couple. Kites generally build in the pine forests on the hills, and select a tree, with a thin bare stem, often very difficult to climb. I once concealed myself at the foot of a tree where a kite was hatching, in order to shoot it on its return to the nest—for they generally fly off at the most distant approach of an enemy. I was perfectly hid; and, after waiting nearly an hour, had an opportunity of witnessing the tact and cunning of the bird. The sun was shining warm upon the nest, or it would, most likely, not have kept me so long; at last I saw it flying round in very wide circles, which gradually narrowed: it then lighted upon a distant tree, and peering round in every direction, chose a nearer; and so on, until it came within three or four trees of the nest. It was now within shot; but I had unfortunately so placed myself as only to command the nest-tree, never doubting that it would light on this before it settled upon the nest—But I was out in my reckoning; as soon as it had tolerably re-as-

sured itself, it rose perpendicularly in the air, and came down upon its nest like a stone. The manner in which I was concealed prevented my getting a flying shot; so nothing remained but to fire through the nest, which proved a sufficient defence, as the kite flew away, and never returned. A few days after, I climbed the tree with some difficulty, and took two eggs, about the size of a hen's, with dusky-red spots.

HAWKING.

As I think it not altogether becoming in us moderns to forget the days of yore, allow me now a word or two about the recreations of our fathers, when they sallied forth, falcon on fist, with a gallant troop of retainers.

The aristocratic sport of falconry, though now banished by our deadly guns, has in it something so exhilarating and so gay, that any one who has witnessed it on ever so small a scale cannot wonder that it was once the pastime of the high and mighty of the land.

There are several kinds of falcons and hawks found in Scotland, all of which are capable of being trained, but the former are greatly superior and always preferred. The largest of this kind is the gos-hawk, the young males of which are called falcon-gentils, and were once thought a distinct species. Next in size is the jer-falcon, rather less than the gentil. These are rare in Scotland, although they occasionally build in some parts, particularly in the Northern Islands. All of them can knock down a heron and the largest game, including hares, but the most esteemed and active on wing is the jer-falcon, distinguished above the rest for its ferocity. Of the

smaller kinds there is the peregrine, which yearly builds in many of our secluded glens and remote precipices. It is of this species that I have most to say. An old black-cock or pheasant is too strong for them, but they are able to bring down grouse or young black-game. Of the hawk tribe there is the hen-harrier, the male of which is blue, and the female, called the ring-tail, brown —the hobby, the sparrow-hawk, and the kestril; the last mentioned very numerous in some of the islands of Loch Lomond. Nor must I omit the smallest of the hawk tribe, the merlin, not much larger than a thrush, inferior to none in boldness and activity. We have occasionally shot it in Dumbartonshire, and admired the elegance of its diminutive form, which seemed, according to its small proportions, a model of agility and strength.

As none of these hawks, when trained, are much worth for game, one would think their depredations could not be very formidable, but, on the contrary, when at large, and allowed their full sweep of hill and dale, they do much mischief. I once put up a flock of teal which flew out upon the loch, a sparrow-hawk pursued, struck one scarcely a foot from the surface, and, though hardly able to bear its burden, flew with it a considerable way to the shore. I marked the place, and recovered the teal, with half of its head eaten, otherwise uninjured. Last summer, a wild-duck with its young brood haunted

a bay of Loch Lomond. They were reduced to a few by a small hawk. My brother saw it pick one up as neatly as possible, and another day the old duck was seen flapping its wings on the surface of the water, and endeavouring to drive off the hawk. The ducklings had all dived, but the first that popped up its head was instantly seized and carried off. The best powers, however, of these little poachers being only exerted on their own behalf, and the nests of the larger falcons being seldom found, the main stay of the falconer is the peregrine.

There is a gamekeeper in Dumbartonshire, who, when a boy, had received some lessons from the late John Anderson of hawking memory, and, having also a natural turn that way, has perhaps as good a knowledge of the art as any one now alive. In a steep crag at the head of Glen-Douglas, a pair of peregrines build every year. The young are always taken by this man to be trained, and the old ones never molested. If great trouble and pains be taken, the young falcons may be fit for flying the first season, and I shall now describe a day's hawking with this keeper, which is a very novel spectacle to any one who has not seen it before, and is always, like coursing, most enjoyed by those ignorant of field-sports.

Early one morning, about the beginning of October, the keeper was on the stubble-field with a couple of

peregrines on his fist, and followed by his son, a young lad, with a third bird, and a brace of old steady dogs. The hawks were all hooded and with bells at their feet; the ground was hunted with great caution, and soon the dogs came to a point. The keeper immediately took off the hood from one of the hawks, and threw it into the air. The bird kept flying round in circles, the bells jingling at its feet. The keeper then advanced rapidly towards the dog, and a covey of partridges rose; the hawk instantly stooped down, and for many hundred yards there was a race, the partridges doing their utmost to outstrip the hawk, and the hawk making every exertion to overtake the partridges. At last he began to gain upon them, and when he drew near, made a sudden dash at one, which he seized in his claws, and flew to the ground. The keeper now walked up and secured the falcon, the partridge not being in any way torn or spoilt. Several points were afterwards got, and three more partridges killed; sometimes the partridges escaped, especially if they rose at a distance, and latterly, when the hawks became tired, they were no longer able to overtake them. When the hawk did not kill the bird, there was more difficulty in recovering it; but the keeper said he never lost one. He had a lure, which was a small board, about a foot long and half a foot broad, with some red cloth nailed upon it, on which he usually

fed them; he threw this lure into the air, hallooing at the same time, and the falcons coming to it, were secured and hooded. When flown at snipe, the most beautiful aërial evolutions may often be seen, each endeavouring to out-soar the other, until both are nearly lost in the clouds; but a woodcock, if the ground is clear, makes the best sport of all.

The gamekeeper at Rossdhu harried this same peregrine's nest two years ago, and trained them for a different but very useful purpose. He flew them at carrion-crows, magpies, &c. which they drove into trees, and prevented from leaving until he advanced with his gun and shot them.

So much time and trouble, however, are required both in keeping and training hawks, that it is most likely the days of falconry are for ever gone by.

ALPINE.

COMMON.

THE ALPINE OR WHITE HARE.

THE white hare inhabits many of our mountains. It is not confined, like the ptarmigan, to the tops of the highest and most inaccessible, but, on the contrary, is often met with on grouse-shooting ranges, where there are few crags or rocks to be seen. I have frequently shot it on flats, between the hills, where it had made its form like the common hare; and, though I have more often moved it in rocky places—where it sometimes has its seat a considerable way under a stone—I do not think it ever burrows among them, as some suppose; for, although hard pressed, I have never seen it attempt to shelter itself, like a rabbit, in that way. Indeed, there would be little occasion for this, as its speed is scarcely inferior to the hares of the wood or plain, and it evidently possesses more cunning. When first started, instead of running heedlessly forward, it makes a few corky bounds, then stops to listen—moving its ears about: and, if the danger is urgent, darts off at full speed, always with the settled purpose of reaching some high hill or craggy ravine. If not pressed, it springs along as if for amusement; but takes care never to give its enemy an advantage by loitering.

I put up one, on the 16th of last March, when inspecting the heather-burning on my moor, which (contrary to their usual practice) kept watching, and allowed me, several times, to come within a hundred yards. I was at first surprised, but the explanation soon occurred to me that it had young ones in the heather. I had thus a good opportunity of noticing the commencement of its change of colour. The head was quite grey, and the back nearly so; which parts are the last to lose, as well as the first to put on, the summer dress. I shot one nearly in the same stage, on the 22nd of last November (1839).* The only difference was, that the whole coat of the former appeared less pure. This is easily

* I twice last autumn (1840) shot fine specimens of the alpine and common hare on the same day. The difference between them, when thus closely compared, was very perceptible. The head of the alpine was much rounder, which was rendered more obvious by the shortness of its ears. The scut was also ludicrously small; while the roundness of the body was increased by the soft and very thick coat of fur, which made that of the common hare appear hard and wiry. One of the alpine hares was shot on the 17th of September; there was not the least appearance of the change of colour. The other, shot on the 6th of October, had a few silver hairs about the toes. On the 11th I shot another which had the feet and half the hind legs white, and was a little silvered behind the ears. On the 2nd of December I shot another couple; the lower part of the body and hind legs were like swan's down, the back and sides grizzled, and the only unchanged parts were the crown of the head and cheeks. The last day I went after them was on the 15th of December, when I wished to ascertain whether the change was quite complete. On that day I killed two hares and a leveret, and was astonished to find that one of the former was in the same stage as those shot on the 2nd of December, while the change in the other hare and in the leveret was entire, except indeed a shading of grey on the back, which is never purely white but in the depth of the severest winters.

accounted for, as in winter the creature, though receiving a fresh accession of hair, loses none of the old, which also becomes white; whereas in spring it casts it all, like other animals. Thus, by a merciful provision, its winter covering is doubly thick; while at the same time, being the colour of snow, (with which our hills are generally whitened at that time of year,) it can more easily elude its numerous foes. The same remark applies to the ptarmigan.

During a mild winter, when the ground is free from snow, the white hare invariably chooses the thickest patch of heather it can find, as if aware of its conspicuous appearance; and to beat all the bushy tufts on the side and at the foot of rocky hills, at such a time, affords the best chance of a shot. The purity, or dinginess of its colour is a true criterion of the severity or mildness of the season. If the winter is open, I have always remarked that the back and lower part of the ears retain a shade of the fawn-colour; if, on the contrary, there is much frost and snow, the whole fur of the hare is very bright and silvery, with scarcely a tint of brown. When started from its form, I have constantly observed that it never returns, evidently knowing that its refuge has been discovered. It will sometimes burrow in the snow, in order to scrape for food, and avoid the cold wind, as well as for security. These burrows are not easily discovered by an unaccustomed eye; the hare runs round the

place several times, which completely puzzles an observer, and then makes a bound over, without leaving any footmark to detect her retreat. It is hollowed out, like a mine, by the hare's scraping and breath, and the herbage beneath nibbled bare.

When deer-stalking in Glenartney, last autumn, I was quite amazed at the multitudes of Alpine hares. They kept starting up on all sides, some as light-coloured as rabbits, and others so dark as to resemble little moving pieces of granite. I could only account for their numbers from the abundance of fine green food and the absence of sheep, which are as much avoided by hares as by deer, from their dirting the ground with their tarry* fleeces.

The alpine hare is a good deal less than the common —shorter, and stouter made for its size—and its legs stronger, for climbing in rocky places. Its colour in summer is a kind of fawn, and in winter the tips of the ears, which are much shorter than those of the common species, are jet black.

* Should anybody be disposed to call in question the correctness of this word, I beg to say my title to it is long use and wont. "Tarry woo'! tarry woo'!" Tarry woo' is ill to spin."

PTARMIGAN IN THEIR USUAL ATTITUDE.

PTARMIGAN-SHOOTING.

It is worth while to make an excursion to the rocky haunts of the ptarmigan, if only for the splendid views they command, and the strange novelty of the scene. Ben-Lomond, Ben-Vein, Ben-Voirla, and indeed all that lofty range in the west, are inhabited by these solitary denizens of the mountain-top. Except for this additional motive, however, not many sportsmen would be tempted to ascend them for the chance of the few shots they would be likely to obtain. Some of the mountains of Ross-shire and Inverness-shire are far easier of access, and the birds much more numerous: as many as ten or twelve brace may there be bagged in a day. Not having had the good fortune to shoot upon them, I can only speak from my experience in the West Highlands. The sportsman who climbs any of the mountains I have named, and falls in with the ptarmigan, cannot fail to observe how well it harmonizes with the scene. Perched upon a ledge of the shelving rock, which it nearly resembles in colour, its wild look seems in contrast with the little dread it shows at the sight of man, who so seldom disturbs its craggy abode. They

are even so stupid, that if stones are thrown over the pack, they will sometimes crouch down, in dread of their more common enemy, the hawk; and, bewildered at the sound of the gun, suffer themselves to be massacred one by one. This experiment, however, more often fails, when they all take wing together at the first stone; and, far from being so slow as many suppose, they are quite as rapid in the air, or even more so, than grouse: they will also sometimes take as long flights, although their more common way is to fly round the angle of a rock or precipice, and immediately drop down.

I cannot better describe ptarmigan-shooting than by giving an account of the first day I ever enjoyed this sport, of which I have a most perfect recollection, and also of my last expedition, in company with an English friend, a short time ago.

When fresh from school, the first year I took out a licence I went on a grouse-shooting excursion soon after the 12th of August. Having slept at the nearest farm-house to the ground, I started at daybreak for the base of "the mighty" Ben-Voirla, where, I had been told, grouse were plentiful that year. My guide was the game-preserver, a reclaimed poacher, who had as quick an eye for a hare sitting, or a ptarmigan among the rocks, as ever peered from under a shaggy brow. After about three miles' very rough walking, we reached our destination. With eager hope I uncoupled my dogs,

who soon came to a dead point; off went both barrels—it certainly was missing in good style!—not even a feather dropped to hang a peg upon for the exercise of my companion's ingenuity. All the excuse that his wit or wisdom could frame was—"You 've made them leave that, at ony rate!" After two or three *equally successful* points, I began to wish myself well out of it; and, looking up to the stupendous mountain, asked if there was any chance of finding ptarmigan should we climb it. Having small hopes of my performance on wing, and knowing, from experience, that a sitting shot might thus be obtained, he caught at the plan, and we commenced our steep and toilsome ascent. An hour and a half brought us to the first shoulder of the hill, when all of a sudden he stopped, eagerness in every feature, and, pointing in the direction of a large rock, said—"If it was na that I thocht it too low, I would tak my oath that thing on the tap o' the rock is a ptarmigan." I now walked first, and, ducking down into a ravine, came out about sixty yards from our object. Immediately it took wing, and my gun was at the same moment discharged, with, I must confess, scarcely an attempt at aim. To my inexpressible delight, the bird dropped. Heedless of spoiling my dogs, I rushed up, and seized my prize. After carefully wrapping its broken wing in tow, to prevent the blood from soiling the feathers,

and giving it in charge to my sharp-sighted friend, I proceeded for a fresh search.

My utmost hope now was to make out the brace, but we toiled to the top of the mountain without seeing another bird. I had sufficient opportunity to admire the care and skill with which my guide scrutinized every likely spot; passing over the hanging cliffs by which we were surrounded with a very superficial glance, he directed his chief attention to the *cairns*, or heaps of rock and stone scattered jaggedly about. All at once I felt his vice-like grasp upon my shoulder, the other hand pointing to one of these cairns, not twenty yards off. I strained my eyes to the utmost, but could see nothing, save the dull gray rock. His impatience grew extreme, and vented itself in loud whispers—"Shoot him sitting!" At last I caught sight of the bird, its head and tail carried low, and colour so like the jutting rock, that it might well have been taken for one of the points—none but a practised eye could possibly have discovered it. With eagerness and trepidation my gun was raised —off went the shot—up went the ptarmigan with a hoarse croak—a fine cock! My second barrel followed the example of the first. The bird flew rapidly round the precipice, and with it my last lingering hope! I saw the difficulty of finding them, and despaired of hitting even when found. So we retraced our steps with

my solitary bird, which happily served to stop minute inquiries about the day's sport.

Many years elapsed before I again visited Ben-Voirla, but in that time I had taken a leaf out of my instructor's book, and could also trust myself not to throw a chance away when the birds were discovered. I was now accompanied by a friend from the South, a very good shot, and particularly anxious to see and bring down a ptarmigan.

When we got to the foot of Ben-Voirla, we found that there were two packs on what is called the second top, and were thus saved the trouble of scaling the highest. So, taking two young farmers as guides, we reached the ground after a stiff climb. On ranging one side of the mountain, just as we were turning round to the other, the dogs ran into a small pack, which jerked round an angle, and were out of sight in a moment. I knew their flight would probably be a short one, so began to look about with the utmost caution: my friend, quite a novice in this sport, had no idea of finding the game himself, and continued to hunt the dogs with great assiduity. We happened to be pretty near together when they again "poked up" a ptarmigan. Neither of us thought of each other, or the ordinary rules of shooting, but fired at once, and down came the bird. This was rather unsatisfactory, as the "honour and glory belonged to neither; however, we determined it should not happen

again. I described what places the birds were most likely to haunt, and cautioned against trusting to the dogs, which were quite unaccustomed to such ground; but finding my companion preferred his own plan, I left him, and commenced my slow and wary search. At last I caught sight of a ptarmigan upon the very ridge of the hill, about thirty yards above me. It was in the same crouching attitude before described, and, had I attempted to put it up, would have dipped out of sight in an instant. I was therefore obliged to shoot it sitting; but the moment I fired, another flew straight over my head, his hoarse croak proclaiming the cock of the pack! I had a fair shot, and down he dropped. The first I killed being a hen, they made a capital pair for my collection.

I was now very anxious my brother-sportsman should have a good chance; so, joining company, we scrutinized the ground on every side without success; only one bird was put up out of all distance, which my friend determined to follow. So, agreeing to meet at the foot of the hill, we took different ranges. Fortune again declared in my favour; for, just as I was scrambling with hand and knee up a steep precipice, a pack of four rose upon the very top, and flew into mid air, just giving me time to steady myself, cock my gun, and get a distant shot, when one of them dropped into the gulf below. I sent my guide to fetch it, which he accomplished with

some difficulty; and then despatched him in quest of my less successful companion, with the injunction that, if he joined in pursuit of my game, the odds would be *three* to *one* in his favour.

I had scarcely got to the peak, where I thought it most probable my three fugitives would again take refuge, when I was overtaken by one of those bitter hail-showers which often fall on the mountains in early autumn; so, placing my gun in its waterproof cover, and my back, Fitz-James-like, against a rock, I impatiently hoped for the cessation of the storm. Scarcely had it begun to abate, when an alpine hare came curtsying past about eighty yards from my shelter, and then seated herself with equal grace, as tempting a mark for a rifle as could possibly be placed. It was not to be resisted even with my small shot. So, slowly uncasing my gun, and taking *deadly* aim, I fired. Puss gave an active bound at this unlooked-for attack, and took her leave with far less ceremony than she made her entrée.

I had just reloaded, when my guide appeared with a breathless malediction on my gun. He had seen my friend going down the mountain, but quite beyond recall, and, when returning to me, had stumbled on the ptarmigan, most conspicuously perched on the top of a rock. He was in the act of taking his marks to know the place again, in the hope of finding me, when my shot abruptly put an end to his schemes. The birds

were equally dissatisfied with the sound as their four-footed ally of the crags, and made the same use of their wings that she did of her legs. It was now late, but as the man had some idea of where they might be, I could not resist the temptation of giving them one more trial. We had almost given up hope, when they a third time rose, very wild, fully a hundred yards off, from a knoll of moss where they were at feed. My time was now "up," so I descended the mountain well pleased with my day's sport, notwithstanding the mishap at the end.

The ptarmigan, I believe, has never been tamed. It subsists on the rock-plants, mosses, and berries, upon which it is curious to see a pack feeding like grouse on young heather. The plumage begins to change colour in October, when the bird gains a double set of feathers for winter. In spring all these drop off, and it again assumes the colour of the rocks.

The woodcut represents a ptarmigan in its common attitude, cowering under shelter of a stone; the other is perched upon the top of a rock, an equally characteristic situation.

THE SPIRIT OF GLENCROE.

WHO has not heard of the Pass of Glencroe? The hills rising perpendicularly on both sides, gray to the top with immense masses of rock, that look as if an infant's touch would roll them from their insecure basis. It was my hap to live for a summer close to this savage gorge. When the weather was dull and rainy, and the clouds hung low upon the mountain-tops, the frowning grandeur of the scene could scarcely fail to depress the most buoyant spirits: and even when the day was fine and clear, a feeling of awe at least was inspired.

When I first came to the neighbourhood of Glencroe it was in early summer, and, of course, the Scotch mists were thick and frequent; but, overlooking the greater angling attractions of Loch-Lomond and its neighbouring streams, I generally took advantage of the fine days to wander, fishing-rod in hand, up this lonely and favourite haunt, to the little moor loch at its head.

The "Lochan Rest," so called from being close to the top of the glen, where a stone is set up with the

well-known inscription, reminding the weary wayfarer to "rest and be thankful," does not hold out many inducements for fishing. The trout, although well fed, and of a very uncommon colour, are not large; and it is most probable that the "lochan," but for its situation, would have been seldom visited by me. After loitering up the glen, where was nothing to relieve the dreariness of the scene but the plaided shepherd, accompanied by his uncouth half wild-looking dog, I generally spent an hour or two in filling my creel, and then slowly retraced my steps. The lochan was immediately under one of the most stupendous precipices in the pass, round the base of which the angler must try his casts.

In desolate regions like this, where the silence is only interrupted by the hoarse croak of the raven, or some other equally wild inhabitant of the mountains, the slightest sound, which otherwise might pass unheeded, will often arrest the attention. Such was the case with me on my first excursion to Lochan Rest. While screwing together my fishing-rod, I heard a low and peculiar whistle from the precipice above. Fancying it might be some shepherd, I took little notice; but as the same strange call was repeated at intervals during the whole time I was fishing, my curiosity was somewhat excited; I strained my eyes along the crags in every direction, but nothing was to be seen.

A few days after I again slung my fishing-basket on

my shoulder for Lochan Rest, and I must confess that the invisible tenant of the cliff had some share in attracting me back so soon. Scarcely had I wet my line, when I heard the mysterious whistle, which continued as before until I left the loch. I tried to ascertain the exact spot from whence the sound proceeded, but was only the more baffled, as I had no doubt it was from a perpendicular and totally inaccessible rock. At last I became so accustomed to it, that I should as soon have expected to miss the trout from the loch as this wild note from the hill.

Summer was now advancing, and several engagements prevented my returning to the lochan during my residence in the neighbourhood; but about the same season two years after, when showing a friend some of our Highland scenery, amongst other places I took him to Glencroe, and, in walking past the little loch, I almost started when I heard the well-remembered whistle! I had before given up hope of finding out the cause, and it had even occurred to me that it might possibly be some echo occasioned by the wind among the rocks. With this absurd solution I was fain to rest satisfied; and it was only last spring, when passing a steep and craggy hill in Perthshire, that the true one was discovered. A small bird flew out before me, and, perching on a detached piece of rock, struck up its wild peculiar note. It was the Spirit of Glencroe! With cautious steps I wound

round the crag to get a nearer view of the bird, when I caught sight of its white breast, and, immediately detecting the *rock-ousel*, felt sorry that my charm was dissolved.

I had once or twice in spring met with the rock-ousel on the moors, but had never heard it make any call beyond a harsh grating chirp.

The little incident mentioned above gave rise to the following stanzas, which I may be excused for inserting :—

THE heather-bell was blooming fair,
And gaily waved the yellow broom,
And many a wild-flower bright and rare
Lent to the breeze its choice perfume.

But lonely, lonely was the scene,—
Grim rose the heights of dark Glencroe,
And, though the sunbeam smiled between,
They scarce returned a kindlier glow.

Above me frowned the jutting rock,
The wimpling burn beside me played;
Around me stared the mountain flock,
And asked—"Who dared their rights invade?"

A whistle strikes my startled ear!
A pipe of shrillest, wildest tone;
But human footstep, far or near,
None could I see—I stood alone!

Still and anon, with every breeze,
I caught that sound so strangely wild;
And who may tell what visions please
The wayward mood of Fancy's child?

Oft I returned, when skies were fair,
To ply my fisher's task below,
And long the viewless tenant there
I named the Spirit of Glencroe!

Once more this thrilling call I heard,
As far I climb'd the misty hill;
Then past me flew a little bird,
With that same note so wild and shrill!

Spirit I deemed it long, and still,
With its white breast and airy form,
It sat like spirit of the hill,
Above the cloud, and mist, and storm!

There is a stone which marks Glencroe,
To weary travellers known the best;
It bids them, ere they further go,
Tarry a-while by Lochan Rest.

Hast *thou* no message, herald lone,
Perched on thy lofty turret-brow?
" Rest and be thankful," says the stone,
Bird of the rocks! what sayest *thou?*

" Rest to the weary—rest for men—
Through earth's dark pass worn wand'rers they—
Rest is the Spirit of our Glen,
But ah! that rest lies far away!

" 'T is far away, 't is far away!
Above my watch-tower lift your eyes;
Rest, weary wand'rers, rest ye may,
But rest *not* till ye reach the skies!"

APPENDIX.

APPENDIX.

TRAPPING THE ONLY EFFECTUAL WAY TO DESTROY VERMIN.

I HAVE put together the following directions for the trapping of vermin, in order that gentlemen may judge of the merits of their keepers in this respect; being well aware how few have anything like a perfect knowledge of this most necessary part of their business. No moors or manors can abound with game unless the vermin are killed off; and if the traps are not set with much skill, and the places for planting them for the different kinds of vermin selected with great judgment, more harm than good is done, as few are caught and the rest put on their guard, and thus rendered more cunning and difficult to be trapped afterwards.

A gentleman should first ascertain if his keeper can perform the mere manual act of setting a trap. This must be done by cutting a shape for it with a mole-spade in the turf, thinly sprinkling the plate with earth, and then a top covering precisely the same as the ground: when set, it should be neither higher nor lower. After having satisfied himself of the neatness of the setting, the gentleman may spring the trap, and if it closes clear of grass or leaves, he may rest satisfied that his keeper knows the A B C of vermin-killing. If, on the contrary, a quantity of the top dressing is caught

between the jaws of the trap, the keeper is not fit to set for vermin, and must be made thoroughly master of this first requisite before he attempts to do so.

I shall now mention the different kinds of four-footed and then winged vermin, giving minute instructions how each may be most readily trapped. Foxes are the most cunning, and consequently most difficult to be taken. The best time to set for them is from the beginning of January—when the males follow the females—till March. Their haunts may then often be discovered by their wild peculiar bark. Any clear open space near them, with a hollow in the middle, is the place to plant traps. The hollow is necessary, as the fox always likes to be out of sight when he is eating. The bait is a piece of hare, rabbit, or the entrails of any animal, covered over slightly with earth; and half-a-dozen traps are set round with the utmost care. Fewer will not do, as the fox might escape between. The bait is covered over in order to make Reynard suppose that another fox or dog may have buried it there. Some drag it along the ground for a considerable distance on either side, after first rubbing it on the soles of their shoes, and letting fall little pieces of cheese at intervals: this can do no harm, but I think as little good.

The circle of twigs is also a very good way of trapping foxes all the year. It should be made larger than for martins or cats, in order to contain more bait—this should be added to without being removed when it taints, *as the greater the scent the better the chance*. Traps set for foxes should never be made fast, or they are apt to knaw the leg off: the best plan is to tie two or three together; for if the fox can drag them, however great the difficulty, he will not attempt the desperate remedy of *amputating his leg*. When they have litters, the old ones may be taken; but it requires great judgment to select the spot they would be most likely to walk over in going to and from their young: a first-rate trapper, however, will generally secure one or both. It is the more

difficult, as the traps must be set at some distance, or the young ones would be apt to stumble into them. As only single traps are set, they should be tied to a stone just large enough for the fox to drag with some trouble. The keeper should always sprinkle a little water over the top covering of the trap to take off the scent of his fingers.

I do not give publicity to these modes of destroying foxes, with any design to their being followed in the Lowlands, where the gentlemen of the "View halloo!" would give me small thanks. I only write for the preservation of the Highland game and lambs; and am sure that if my plan was vigorously followed up, we should not be infested with half so many foxes as we are, "fox hunter" and all! This, I believe it never will be, the fun of a Highland fox-hunt being so popular among the farmers as to overbalance the merits of any other system requiring trouble, dexterity, and patience.*

The otter, although harmless on the moor, is sufficiently mischievous in the loch to deserve honourable mention here. On the banks of the lochs and rivers which he frequents, he has always a fane to which he resorts once a day; this is either a stone or root of a tree, but if neither of these are at hand, he scrapes up the sand or gravel into a small mound. It is easy to know his marks, as his dung is full of fish-bones. Traps should be set all round, a twenty-feet cord tied to each, with a cork or piece of wood attached; the traps never to be fastened, otherwise the otter may pull out his leg, from its being so

* I lately saw in the newspapers a plan for extirpating foxes in the Highlands. Each hill farmer was to keep a couple of fox-hounds, a good greyhound, besides terriers. When occasion offered, they were to join packs, and collect the best shots (*alias*, the greatest poachers) in the neighbourhood. I can only say, without in the least impugning the motives or honesty of intention of the projector, that if the Highland proprietors suffer a gang of this kind to take the hill at pleasure, they will soon hardly have a head of game on their estates. As to allowing farmers to keep greyhounds, terriers, &c., no gentleman who sets any value on his grouse or hares would ever think of it.

smooth, thick, and short. The moment he is caught, he waddles with the trap to the water, which sinks and drowns him, the line and float showing where. It is also an excellent plan to look for the place where he lands, and plant a trap just under water. As soon as he strikes for ground, he is caught by the fore-feet. This trap needs no covering but the water, and is never suspected.

Cats, martins, and fowmartes are easily trapped. Plant a circle of twigs about three yards round, the twigs a foot and a half long and close to each other, placing the same bait as for a fox in the centre, but without any covering; leave two openings at opposite sides just large enough for the trap. You may also set with baits hanging on the stem of a tree—a few twigs placed on either side to prevent the vermin sneaking in there, and so carrying off the bait. Box-traps are very good for stoats or weasels, but as they are generally set in the low grounds, where pole-cats also abound, I prefer an iron rat-trap with a strong spring; having found that the fowmarte constantly pushed up the lid of the other, and so escaped. The rat-trap will hold a pole-cat, and do little or no injury to cattle or dogs. The bait should be hung upon a twig immediately above, and almost out of reach of the weasels.

Stoats, and especially weasels, are often seen in great abundance in summer. They may then be very easily shot, as you have only to imitate the squeak of a mouse to bring them close to you. I once, when without a gun, decoyed one so far away from its retreat that I killed it with my stick. Should the keeper see a weasel, all he has to do is, with as much speed as possible, to cut a small piece from any of his baits, drag it along the ground where he last saw the weasel, and hang it on a twig with his rat-trap under, as before described: if he does not let too long time elapse, it is sure to be taken. The weasel, like the merlin, is the maximum of strength, courage, and activity, in the minimum of size.

The depredations of this little creature would not be so formidable, if he contented himself with satisfying hunger. But on the contrary, whenever he has the opportunity, he murders by wholesale like the martin, rejecting everything but the most dainty morsels. One of these little rascals, in pursuit of a rabbit or young hare, is the very miniature of a wolf running down a deer; a panic comes over the victim, which prevents it from making a determined effort to escape. Instead of distancing its persecutor by taking a long stretch, the poor terror-stricken rabbit keeps slowly dotting along, only a short way ahead, and squats down the first opportunity. The weasel follows on the track, and very soon the rabbit, not daring to take refuge in its hole, resigns itself to its fate.

I kept a weasel for some time in a wire cage, which soon became tame enough to pull little pieces of meat from the hand through the bars. Having a mind to try its pluck, I procured from a rat-catcher an enormous male rat, at least twice the size of the weasel, and in presence of several friends turned it into the cage. The rat reared itself on its hind legs and fought with the utmost desperation, but in less than a quarter of a minute it lay gasping on its side. There is a curious account of a similar fight between a large buck-ferret and a rat, in Jesse's Gleanings of Natural History. But I cannot help thinking, either that the rat must have been the champion of the *genus mus*, or the ferret the most faint-hearted of his species. Once let a ferret, properly entered at rats, get within a gripe of its foe, and it will seize *by scent* with the rapidity of lightning, and never quit its hold while life remains. The pheasantry-keeper, whom I before mentioned as having taught grouse, black-game, pheasants, &c. to live together in harmony, tried a similar experiment with a ferret, a pole-cat, a stoat and a weasel. They were confined in a large box grated over with iron bars; and the result proved that a ferret stands upon little ceremony with a much more fierce and active enemy than a rat. The first

victim was the stoat, whose place was supplied by another, which soon shared the fate of its predecessor. The ferret next attacked and killed the weasel; and, to crown all, the polecat, a large male, nearly double the size of the ferret, a small female, was found dead one morning, the cage exhibiting the marks of a desperate struggle; the fowmarte certainly fought at disadvantage, one of its fore-legs having been injured by a trap. These creatures had lived together for upwards of a month, after which time the ferret commenced its attacks at intervals of a few days or a week. I went out daily to see them fed, when the dinner party exhibited very little kindliness or good breeding.

No traps should be set for running vermin during the warm weather, as the bait so soon taints; nor in hard frost, as the traps are then apt not to spring, or to hold the vermin so slightly that they escape.

WINGED VERMIN.

The hawk tribe, seldom or never taking a bait, are the most difficult to be trapped of all winged vermin. The only plan with any chance of success (except at the breeding time) is to place a trap on the top of a wall, or bare stump of a tree, throwing a dead cat or other carrion at the foot; the hawks will often alight, to look down at it, and thus be caught. A hawk, however, will always return to any bird he has killed, even should scarcely anything be left but the bones. In such a case, immediately procure a trap, hang the bird directly above, and *close* to it, or the hawk may reach over and take it down without touching the trap.

But when they hatch is the time thoroughly to thin them. The nests should be most carefully searched out, and not disturbed until the young are more than half fledged. Many shoot the old hen flying off her eggs, but this is not the way to extirpate the race, as the males of course escape.

When the young are pretty strong, and able to call loudly from hunger, take them out of the nest, and make two circles *out of sight of each other*. These circles must not be artificial or formed of twigs stuck in the ground, but any bushes of furze, heather, or rushes, must be taken advantage of for the purpose. Half of the young ones must be tied in the one, and half in the other. They must have very short tethers, or they will waddle into the trap. If this is well executed, you are sure of both old ones next day.

Buzzards* and kites are easily trapped in autumn or winter, as they readily take a bait. It is not worth while to take much trouble about them, as they do little mischief to game, unless a young bird that cannot fly, or small leveret, happen to stumble in their way. I am loath to bring an accusation against my great favourite the ivy-owl, but truth compels me to say that he is nearly as injurious to game as the buzzard—quite as much so as the kite. The other owls, viz., the white and the long and short-eared, may be considered harmless.

Carrion-crows and ravens, or "corbies," take them for all in all, are perhaps as mischievous as hawks. The best season for trapping them is in March and April; the circle of twigs to be set in conspicuous places; the same bait as for foxes, martins, &c., will do, but the best is a dead lamb, from being so readily seen; and at that season it may be very easily procured. The numbers taken in this way are astonishing. When they become cunning, take down the twigs and plant half-a-dozen traps round the lamb. If there is a puddle of water near, the bait may be placed in the middle of it, with one or two entrances, upon which traps may be set;

* A curious story of the honey-buzzard was related to me by a gentleman whose name stands high as a scholar, and who takes great interest in Natural History. A friend of his was passing a gravel-pit, when he perceived what he thought was a bird without a head, he walked silently forward and seized it, and discovered that his prize was a honey-buzzard, which had thrust its head into a wasp's nest, and was busily engaged in devouring the larvæ. The bird was kept tame for some time afterwards.

the ravens, &c., are sure to light on these entrances before settling on the lamb, and the trouble of setting so many traps as would otherwise be required is thus avoided.

Magpies, jays, &c., all take a bait; but the grand recipe thoroughly to destroy them, is to find the nests and set the young in circles.

There are many other ways of killing all these vermin which I have not thought it worth while to mention, as they cannot stand a comparison with those I have named. Traps must always be set close to paths or any other open places near the haunts of the different vermin, with which it should be the keeper's great endeavour to make himself thoroughly acquainted. If placed according to these rules, there is not much danger of either cattle or game getting into any, except those set *without circles* for carrion-crows or foxes, which of course require caution. We constantly see keepers lounging about with their guns in pursuit of vermin; this ought not to be. Guns only tempt them to idleness, and are an excellent excuse for doing nothing. In my opinion no vermin should be shot by a gamekeeper. But if his master prefer securing the old hens as they fly off the nest during hatching time, instead of waiting for the young to come out, no other plan can be adopted. My reasons to the contrary have been given.

I have no doubt that the truly valuable keeper, who takes an interest in the duties of his situation, will approve of all I have said, and endeavour to profit by it: the careless, ignorant, and lazy will as certainly cavil and condemn.

TRAPS.

Great care should be taken in the selection of traps: none but an approved maker ought to be employed: *that the springs are well tempered and strong is of the utmost consequence.* The jaws must *overlap*, which is a great preventive

to the legs, especially of the winged vermin, being shred off. To avoid this, some traps are made with weaker springs and long teeth—these are not to be recommended, for, although the teeth may counterbalance the weakness of the spring, yet the vermin are apt to feel them when walking up to the bait, and slink back without stepping on the plate. It is also much more difficult to set them neatly. Traps whose springs have been weakened by constant use may be reserved for flying vermin.

VERMIN TERRIER.

I had almost forgotten to say that every gamekeeper, in all his trapping and other excursions, should be accompanied by an excellent vermin terrier. The use of this dog is to challenge vermin in earths, clefts of rocks, &c., thus making the keeper aware where to plant a trap—to find out fowmartes in old walls or heaps of stones, where they generally conceal themselves—and to run those banes of the preserve, the *semi*-wild cats, into trees, where, with the assistance of his master, they may easily be killed. A dog will soon become so expert at this last accomplishment that few cats will be able to escape him. These cats do much more mischief than real wild ones, as they are impudent enough to carry their depredations into the midst of the preserve, and close to the most frequented places. The fowmarte, although an enemy to all game, is generally more calumniated than he deserves: he is not nearly so injurious as the martin or cat. I have frequently found his retreat when no other signs of plunder were to be seen except a few frogs half-eaten. When discovered, the pole-cat has no activity, and if the wall or heap of stones where he has sheltered himself can be pulled down or removed, he cannot escape.

Only *one and the same terrier* should be the keeper's constant companion, as the dog will soon be "up to" the

traps, and from continual practice become first-rate at this work. He must have a very good nose, and be perfectly callous to game of all descriptions, but especially rabbits and hares.

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